

# Paternal Presidentialism

*Gendered Rhetorical Strategies in the 2000 and 2004 U.S.  
Presidential Elections*

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# 1. Introduction: Analyzing Presidential Campaign Rhetoric with Gender as the Frame of Understanding

## 1.1 Questions and Theme

In a memo to his staff during the 1968 presidential campaign, Richard Nixon wrote that “potential presidents are measured against an ideal that’s a combination of leading man, God, father, hero, pope, king, with maybe just a touch of the avenging Furies thrown in.”<sup>1</sup> In Nixon’s notion of presidential image six out of seven examples are male leaders with supreme, individual authority. The Furies are female, and three, but “just a touch” of them is needed. Do presidential hopefuls have a similar ideal today? If so, how do these ideals of an autonomous masculine leader figure influence the presidential contest? This thesis is about how gender comes into play in the rhetorical strategies that candidates for the presidency use to present themselves to win approval among voters. Any person running for president has to negotiate symbols and images linked to the notions Commander in Chief and Ceremonial Head of State. This thesis attempts to identify gender in presidential campaign rhetoric and asks what their function is in the campaign setting. The empirical basis of the research is campaign messages from the last months of the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections.

Anyone interested in gender and politics in the 2004 American presidential election was probably struck by the not so subtle attacks on John Kerry’s masculinity and autonomy staged by Bush supporters and underscored by Bush himself in his comments about his opponent, as well as the Bush campaign’s careful stagecraft of the president as a masculine leader. The objective of this thesis is not only to investigate and describe such rhetoric, but also to describe its symbolic origins and its function in the political system. My studies in the history of the American presidency and the history of masculinities in American society made me question to what degree notions of ideal manhood influenced the presidency as an institution. The rhetoric of masculine toughness, so evident in the 2004 election, in turn

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph A. Pika and John Anthony Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 6th ed. (Washington D.C: CQ Press, 2006), 25.

made me wonder how significant negotiations of ideal manhood are in presidential elections in contemporary America. As heroic masculine imagery in political communication in a time of war has a long history and therefore is to be expected, I also included the 2000 election in my study to investigate how gender came into play in a peacetime election. The exploration of gendered meanings in the rhetoric of these elections has formed a foundation for analyzing the gendered symbolism of the presidency as it appears in election discourse.

One of the major concerns about the presidency in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was whether the institution has gained power at the expense of Congress to such a degree that it has grown “imperial,” or “out of control.”<sup>2</sup> A question that has followed me in the work with this thesis is whether rhetorical strategies based on specific masculine images could help justify increase in the executive’s power. The symbols Nixon evokes in his staff memo suggest that there could indeed be such a foundation for arguing for increased power within the masculine symbolic field the presidency seems to operate in. The analysis of the two elections considers to what degree such images are active in presidential campaign rhetoric as it occurred in these elections.

The major questions this thesis tries to shed light upon and answer can be summed up as the following:

- Are there images of manhood at work in the 2000 and 2004 presidential candidates’ self-presentation? If so, which?
- Are there rhetorical strategies that make use of gendered symbolism and images? If so, which images and symbols do they employ, and what is their function?
- What political implications, if any, do the gendered meanings in the campaign discourse have?

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Lind, "The Out of Control Presidency," in *Points of View. Readings in American Government and Politics*, ed. Robert E. Diclerico and Allan S. Hammock (New York: McGraw Hill Companies, 2004), Arthur M. Jr Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973).

## 1.2 Sources and material

### 1.2.1 Selection

The phenomenon that is studied in this thesis is the use of gendered rhetorical strategies in the last two American presidential campaigns. There are enormous amounts of primary and secondary material that are relevant to investigating this issue, and the scope of this thesis only allows for a small part of it to come into consideration. The analysis is based on the three presidential debates, the acceptance speeches and a selection of the television ads of Al Gore, George W. Bush and John Kerry in the 2000 and 2004 presidential campaigns. This material has been chosen for several reasons that can be summed up as representation, coverage and saturation. The material shows rehearsed and controlled pieces of the candidates' message. This choice is made partly to show that gender is not, as sometimes assumed, at the margins of presidential campaign rhetoric. This thesis tries to explain how gender works at the center of it. One drawback with this choice is that the "juicy" or suggestive material that a candidate would not say in a major speech or debate, since blunt attacks on an opponent's masculinity is not considered polite political exchange, is not always included. Although it would be easier to exemplify gender in rhetoric through California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's suggestion that Democrats are "girlie men," it would not serve to explain the function of gender in mainstream campaign rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> This is a significant limitation of the project, but also one that I have had to make adjustments to in the process. In 2004 the shadow campaign from the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, for instance, was so significant to John Kerry's performance as a man capable of leading the armed forces, that their film had to be included.

Another consequence of the focus on the "extreme mainstream" of campaign communication is that Ralph Nader's 2000 campaign has been omitted. Nader did not participate in the 2000 debates, and got the meager result of 5% in the general election. Had Nader's message been particularly suggestive about gender-image and gender-politics, including him could have been justified, but he had only a slightly stronger following among men than women, and did not focus on gender-image particularly in his campaign. For the

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<sup>3</sup> Arnold Schwarzenegger, "Speech at the 2004 Republican National Convention.," (New York: 31.august 2004: 2004).



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1996 campaign Ross Perot could, in contrast, be more interesting, as he gained 6% of the female and 11% of the male vote.<sup>4</sup>

In sum the selected material makes out the most widely broadcasted, viewed, read and commented pieces of political communication in the campaigns, and is thus a good proportion of the textual material that the electorate had available when evaluating and voting for the candidates. Furthermore, there is enough of the material to give a comprehensive impression of the overall campaign strategies and issues in the two election contests. When reading more campaign material of the same nature, particularly speeches, I have tried to adhere to the principle of saturation, meaning that the gathering of material should stop when the gathering no longer supplies new information, but rather strengthens the material that one already has at hand.<sup>5</sup>

When viewing and analyzing the campaign films, a further limiting of the scope of the detailed analysis had to be made because of the volume of the material. It was not feasible within the limits of this project to carefully analyze every one of the 50 campaign films that the candidates aired during the campaign (and that number is limited to the official films, a score of unofficial ones were aired in addition). Thus the focus of the analysis has been limited to the central movie of each campaign that presented that candidate and was aired early in the campaign. These were: “Successful Leader” (Bush, 2000), “1969” (Gore 2000), “Safer, Stronger” (Bush 2004) and “Heart” (Kerry 2004). All the films and abstracts of the lines and structure in the films have been taken from the American Museum of the Moving Image’s project “The Living Room Candidate” at <http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/>. I discovered in the process, however, that it was not possible to discuss the gendered rhetoric in the 2004 campaign without reference to the Bush campaign’s attack ads on John Kerry’s personal qualities because they addressed the specific issues that I wanted to discuss in the campaign. These films were “Windsurfing,” “Wolves,” and “Global Test.” The selected material is from different genres of campaign speech, and thus have particularities and qualities specific to that genre.

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<sup>4</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 60-61.

<sup>5</sup> Dorthe Marie Søndergaard, *Tegnet på kroppen. Køn: Koder og konstruksjoner blant unge voksne i akademia* (København: Museum Tusculanums forlag, 1996), 67.

### 1.2.2 Material

Presidential campaign films have been an important part of presidential campaigns since 1952. As television has surpassed print media as a source of information about politics not only in amount, but also in the impact on voters, the campaign film has become even more important. The biographical and documentary film that aspires to give a complete portrait of the candidate as a person and potential president has traditionally been most popular among campaign organizers and candidates. Modern campaign films have incorporated more of an advertisement style, while keeping the presentational modes that people have come to associate with the presidency.<sup>6</sup> In this thesis the visual and lingual political communication in the campaign films is analyzed in relation to the message about the candidate's image and politics in the debates and the acceptance speech. Thus the analysis is focused on content, with attention to images, symbols, myths, and discourses that can be related to gender and the presidency, as the films often encapsulate myths about "the ideal leader, the country, and its people" that may have gendered implications.<sup>7</sup> The presidential campaign film is the primary media of presenting the candidate as a person. In these attempts of favorable and 'presidential' self-presentation, gendered self-presentation can be extracted and discussed. Although the films are obviously as biased as any other statement a candidate makes about himself, the selected films have a positive tone that make them more trustworthy than attack-ads to the public.<sup>8</sup>

Out of all broadcasts during a presidential campaign, the debates are likely to be the longest, most in depth and impartial impression of the voter's alternatives in the general election. "'Debate' has become a buzzword for 'serious politics'" Jamieson and Birdsell comment in their book about presidential debates in America.<sup>9</sup> It certainly seems so if one is to judge from the way debates are followed intently by commentators in virtually all newspapers and politically interested members of the public in America and abroad. They are

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<sup>6</sup> Joanne Morreale, *The Presidential Campaign Film. A Critical History* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1993), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>8</sup> That does not cover the three attack ads mentioned.

<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson and David S. Birdsell, *Presidential Debates. The Challenge of Creating an Informed Electorate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5.

major campaign events, and the only campaign events where the electorate can see the contenders go head to head with each other. The rhetorical strategies that candidates use in these debates are the rehearsed core of their political message in relation to their opponents. Handlers and speech writers have examined virtually every word and response that the candidates use in these exchanges. Very little is left to the spur of the moment. What the candidates express here is the very core of their campaign message, but with the challenging twist of arguing against the opponent's response. The debates are particularly interesting to analyze because they force the candidate not only to frame their performance with reference to an ideal "presidential character" but also in relation to their opponent. The subtle and not so subtle attacks on the opponent's personality are a part of this, but so is the discussion of political issues. As is shown in the analysis of the debates, political issues are sometimes just as useful as personal attacks when it comes to proving character deficiencies in the opponent. The debates also bring out the major issues in the campaign because they are held close to the general election, typically in October. The first films are aired in the spring, and the national conventions are in the summer. Thus they show the campaign rhetoric in different stages of the campaign.

The national party convention acceptance speech is an institution in presidential campaigns as much as the debates, but in content they differ in several significant ways. The targeted public is the party convention and ardent supporters of the candidates, as well as the general public. This seems to lead to a slightly more blunt style than what one finds in debates, but also a more 'epic' one. When the candidate accepts his nomination, his main concern is to establish the grandeur of his cause. This is often done by invoking the classical symbols of nation, family and community. The language in these speeches tends to be more poetic than most other speeches in the campaign, and more directed towards evoking emotion in the listener. The acceptance speech is particularly suited to reveal the main themes and symbols in the candidates' self-presentation. The way they portray their background and family, and what values they tag to that picture is often very apparent. Furthermore, the candidates tend to lay out their core agenda in relation to what they care about and who they are as persons.

### 1.2.3 Commentary and Secondary Sources

I have also conducted a Lexis-Nexis major newspapers search for newspaper commentary in major American papers to get an impression of how the candidates' rhetorical strategies were welcomed in the media during the campaign. The result was a cross section of commentary on the election that revealed that gender was not particularly often addressed directly by commentators unless they were writing about the 'gender-gap' in men and women's voting behavior, but would readily comment on gendered aspects of the candidates' performance under the headline of moral values and conservative or liberal appeal. I also searched for articles on presidential character. I found commentary on a candidate's performance of manhood in articles that were primarily about their wives and potential First Ladies. Commenting on the First Ladies seems to have given the commentator a window to address how the candidate performed masculinity in relation to his wife. I used the articles in this search to adjust my impression of the political situation and the coverage in the campaigns, but I have not used it for a media analysis, as that would be a project in its own right.

## 1.3 Methodological Approach

### 1.3.1 Text Analysis in American Studies

This thesis is written in the American Studies tradition. One of the main methodological concerns in American Studies is leaving strategic options open, so that every relevant method to the question can be used to shed light on the question. In his classic essay "Can American Studies Develop a Method?" Richard Nash Smith argues that what is needed in the field is "a method of analysis that is at once literary (...) and sociological."<sup>10</sup> The field does not have a methodology in and of itself, but aspires to a truly interdisciplinary approach where tools from the social sciences are used, as well as those from literary studies. Still, American Studies are firmly placed in the humanities, where the analysis of text is the focus.

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<sup>10</sup> Henry Nash Smith, "Can 'American Studies' Develop a Method?," *American Quarterly* (1957): 201.

This trait is reflected in the most classical of American Studies approaches; the study of American society through the arts. This thesis balances the approaches of “content analysis” in the social and literary sciences, approaches that will be dealt with more thoroughly below.<sup>11</sup> The fact that American Studies does not have a prescribed method and values methodological freedom is a challenge to its students. The student of American Studies has to be able to use and evaluate the usefulness of qualitative methods of inquiry from the social sciences, studies of historical material and texts from the field of history, literary analysis, and language studies to truly master her own field. With that mixed blessing I will explain my choices of methods for this inquiry in gendered presidential campaign discourse.

The focus in content analysis of written text in the social sciences has traditionally been on finding terms and concepts in the text that could be subject to quantification, as well as selecting text samples without heed to qualitative selection (although this is not as much the case today).<sup>12</sup> Though I have tested the idea of quantification of certain words in the texts in this analysis, the meaningfulness of such an exercise relies on the analyst’s ability to convincingly argue why the overuse of a term in a text sample is significant, and to what end. For instance, the word “tough” occurs four times in the first 2004 presidential debate, three times used by George W. Bush, once used by John Kerry. The word “smart” occurs three times in the same debate, all three uttered by John Kerry. It is possible to label that finding to discourses about strength, wisdom and manhood, as Georgia Duerst-Lahti shows in her analysis of masculinity as a factor in the 2004 election through such quantification of words.<sup>13</sup>

Two problems made me abandon this approach. Firstly, I could not explain how such a content analysis based on quantification could provide a sufficient insight to my question about how gender appears in campaign discourse, and what its role is. To figure that out one would have to look at the text-internal and text-external context that the words occur in. One

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<sup>11</sup> Leo Marx, "American Studies. A Defense of an Unscientific Method," *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (1969): 77.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.: 77,78.

<sup>13</sup> Georgia Duerst-Lahti, "Presidential Elections. Gendered Space and the Case of 2004," in *Gender and Elections. Shaping the Future of American Politics*, ed. Susan J. Carroll and Richard J. Fox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 31.

would have to include homonyms and synonyms that allude to the word. One would have to take into account the voter's impression of the candidate. One would have to look at the political issues they occurred in relation to, and so on. Secondly, the approach requires that one could create a list of words that signify particular discourses, and test to what degree they are used. This is very difficult if part of the project is finding out which discourses are at work in the first place. For the matter at hand, the conclusion is that while quantification of gendered rhetoric in presidential discourse is possible with quite some effort, it is neither the best nor the shortest route to a possible explanation of the use of gendered discourse in the campaigns.

A 'strict' critical discourse analysis was also considered for this project. The strength of this method is that it is possible to quite clearly describe the textual features that signify a discourse or a symbol, and thus secure a strong link between words in the text and the analysis. It is a rather daunting project, though, to make a careful linguistic analysis of such a large body of text. I tested the approach in spite of that, but was discouraged when I realized how little of the material I wanted to consider would fit in given that methodological approach. The attempt to do this, though, convinced me that the tools for identifying the content and meaning of a text outlined by Norman Fairclough were quite useful. These issues made me settle for a looser text analysis focused on content and ideas revealed through political agendas, images, symbols and discourses that was inspired by tools from critical discourse analysis. Another way of putting it would be that I opted for the traditional way of studying text and society within American Studies, but only after testing these other two options.

### **1.3.2 Text and discourse analysis**

*"Here's what I'll say about the \$87 billion. I made a mistake in the way I talk about it. He made a mistake in invading Iraq. Which is a worse decision?"*

John Kerry, October 8<sup>th</sup> 2004.

Most people would agree with what John Kerry implies in the quote above, namely that actions are more important than language in politics. But in hindsight the quote is also interesting because "the way" he "talked about" the \$87 billion, or more generally, what he

really thought about the war in Iraq was one of the things that cost him the 2004 presidential election. Words make a big difference in politics, in fact “politics partly consists in the disputes and struggles which occur in language and over language.”<sup>14</sup> For the vast majority of people, politics is only tangible through language. There are material political realities, like the shape and size of politically granted benefits and taxes, but nobody experiences the consequences of all political decisions. Most of the electorate will try to judge through their abstract understanding of issues and the candidates’ intentions as they appear in the media. In a presidential election the text a candidate produces represents possible realities in a future where the candidate is in office, which the voter has to imagine. Thus the limits on what the candidate is able to communicate will limit his actions, as he is held accountable to what he has said. Michael Shapiro explains that

when persons engage in conduct, that conduct takes on a meaning or meanings as a result of the interpretations that are available in the language from which the interpreters select. When we therefore review the sets of constructs relating to conduct that exists in a language, we are viewing not only the horizons of possible speech, but also the horizons of possible actions.”<sup>15</sup>

This thesis studies spoken text in the presidential campaign because it tells a lot about possible actions, in this case concerning gender and political image.

A president or presidential candidate’s communication strategy in a campaign is shaped by a number of important factors. Among these are incumbency, power relations between the parties in congress, the political situation and agenda at the time, the economy and many others. In addition to these easily identified factors, the communication is shaped by dominant discourses. Discourse can most widely be defined as “*ways of seeing the world*, often with reference to relations of power and domination”<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, they are frames of understanding and frames of communication. What is sayable and not, and from what subject position something can be argued, is defined by available discourses, and whom

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<sup>14</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, ed. Christopher N. Candlin, *Language in social life series* (London: Longman, 1989), 23.

<sup>15</sup> Iver B. Neuman, *Mening, materialitet, makt. En innføring i diskursanalyse* (Oslo: Fagbokforlaget, 2000), 39.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Sunderland, *Gendered Discourses* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 6.

these discourses are available to.<sup>17</sup> “Ideological power” is a part of a discourse that is used to “project one’s practices as universal and ‘common sense,’” and thus define the limits of a discourse.<sup>18</sup> Such ideological power often defines the limits of what it is acceptable to say and not within a given social situation. For instance, the notion of ‘supporting our troops’ represented a troublesome ideological imperative in the 2004 election campaign for John Kerry. Maintaining a balance between criticizing the war and ‘supporting our troops’ was a difficult maneuver, and made his message appear confused to some voters. Discourses also tend to include ‘storylines’. A storyline is a culturally naturalized narrative that is used as a frame for understanding text and actions.<sup>19</sup> A discourse will often have specific ‘signifiers’ as well, that can consist of words or phrases that is associated with that particular discourse. The mentioned facets of a discourse can generally be categorized as “social conditions of production” of text and “social conditions of interpretation” of text.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.3.3 Gender as a Frame of Understanding

Some may be puzzled by the notion of studying gender in a political contest where only men participate. Gender is a social reality, as well as a frame of understanding. This thesis uses gender as a frame of understanding. It is not primarily concerned with gender-relations, it is concerned with gendered language and meanings. Masculine and feminine, for instance, are such frames of understanding through which we interpret behavior, values and opinions. Gender as a frame of understanding is actively used in political communication. Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi’s remark “it takes a woman to clean house” is an example of a statement that uses the image of a housewife to get a point across.<sup>21</sup> John Kerry’s message “I will hunt down and kill the terrorists, wherever they are” is

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<sup>17</sup> Göran Bergström and Kristina Borèus, "Diskursanalys," in *Textens mening och makt. Metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys*, ed. Göran Bergström and Kristina Borèus (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2005), 312.

<sup>18</sup> Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Neuman, *Mening, materialitet, makt. En innføring i diskursanalyse*, 33, Dorthe Marie Søndergaard, "Destabiliserende diskursanalyse: veje ind i poststrukturalistisk inspireret empirisk forskning," in *Kjønn og fortolkende metode. Metodiske muligheter i kvalitativ forskning*, ed. Hanne Haavind (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2000), 77.

<sup>20</sup> Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 25.

<sup>21</sup> James Westhead, *Women Power Comes to Capitol Hill* (news.bbc.co.uk, 2007 [cited Jan. 11. 2007]); available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6212031.stm>.



another example, in which he uses the image of a man out hunting to describe himself.<sup>22</sup> One could say that a woman can hunt and kill just as good as a man. That is true, but does the average voter envision a woman hunting and killing with the same ease as a man? Gender in campaign rhetoric needs to be identified through the images and ideals they summon in the interpreters frame of understanding.

This thesis should be read as a work in interdisciplinary gender studies, as well as American Studies. This has the practical implication that there is a level of complexity to the term 'gender' and the related concepts. In this thesis gender is understood as a discourse that manifests itself in the social practices that people understand as masculine or feminine. This builds on a 'constructivist' understanding of gender that sees gender as a constantly shifting product of society, as opposed to an 'essentialist' understanding that sees gender as a fixed difference related to biological traits. Judith Butler states that gender is "not a performance that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject that it appears to express."<sup>23</sup> This understanding stresses that gender is not only something that people 'do', but that the discourse that subjects express themselves through shapes their gender beyond individual choice. This is significant because it is a way of seeing gender as discourse, and thus a phenomenon that only exists in the shape and to the extent that it is performed. However, gender cannot be performed without regard to subject position. The body is a significant part of the subject position. It is the "situation" from which we act and speak.<sup>24</sup> The bodily situation influences the meaning of what we say and do, as the examples from Nancy Pelosi and John Kerry's use of gendered images to describe their political capabilities above show.

When people appear as men and women in a social context they are constantly negotiating discourses about gender in the same way that they negotiate with other social codes, consciously or unconsciously. In this analysis of how candidates for the presidency

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<sup>22</sup> The Commission on Presidential Debates, *The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate* [Transcript] ([www.debates.org](http://www.debates.org), November 19 2004); available from <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2004a.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. Sara Salih (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 1990), 130.

<sup>24</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley, Vintage Books, 1989 ed. (Paris: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1952).

express themselves, the gender as performance could be understood even more literally. Performance has a sibling in the term *speech act*, meaning that the spoken word represents or becomes an action. In politics promises, vows and ambitions should be understood as *perlocutionary speech acts*, meaning that if the politician gets his way, they will become reality; the actions that follow the political speech are “performed as consequence of words.”<sup>25</sup> When it comes to candidate image, aspects of gender, class, race etc. that influence the public’s impression will derive from the candidates’ person and background, but outcome of who they think he is relies on his negotiations of those social factors and performance of the role of potential Executive Officer. This negotiation of candidate image could be understood as a kind of *illocutionary speech act*, meaning that the words “perform themselves.”<sup>26</sup> An example of this is George Washington’s thematization and insistence on himself as a “humble” man in his inauguration speech. The act itself may not be very humble, but his repetition and insistence on humbleness as a personal quality established this as an integral part of the image that today forms our perception of the first president.<sup>27</sup> In the analysis of gender in campaign messages the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech will be useful for distinguishing between political statements about gender-politics and gendered statements about the candidates as persons, although it is necessary to keep in mind that one will necessarily influence the other and vice versa.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.3.4 Practical approach

The practical approach used in this text analysis is based on a simple course of action, as described by Leo Marx as a strategy for text analysis in American Studies.<sup>29</sup> The first step in the process of analysis was watching and reading all of the selected material

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<sup>25</sup> Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 44.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Hinckley, *The Symbolic Presidency. How Presidents Portray Themselves* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 6, George Washington, "George Washington's First Inaugural Address (1789)," in *The Evolving Presidency*, ed. Michael Nelson (Washington D.C: CQ Press, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Butler notes that Austin’s distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts “is tricky, and not always stable,” but it fits neatly with the distinctions that need to be made in the analysis of gendered political speech, so I have used it in spite of that Butler, *ES*, 44.

<sup>29</sup> Marx, "American Studies. A Defense of an Unscientific Method," 83-86.

comprehensively and closely with the aim of identifying gendered images and the context they occurred in. An image, in this sense, “refers to a simple verbal recording of a sense perception” and does not “carry the burden of implication (...) beyond what is required for mere reference” which would rather make it a symbol.<sup>30</sup> Identifying symbols is naturally also a part of this phase, although the role of images in symbols and the implication of symbols also requires a study of what Marx calls “the spirit of the age,” which in this case would be the political situation in the last few months before the election, as well as more generally in American society at the time. To conduct this next step I consulted research on the two elections as well as popular commentary. To get an impression of the role of gender in the campaigns as it appeared to the electorate at the time I conducted a newspaper search in Lexis-Nexis’ major newspapers category for articles addressing gender in the election contest, and read the commentary that the search produced. Simultaneously and subsequent to these efforts I consulted a body of relevant academic work and theory hoping to find theoretical frameworks that could help me explain how gender functions in this political setting, and what its significance is. The theoretical concepts and historical context I have used to help me understand the gendered rhetoric in the material is accounted for in chapter two. Leo Marx notes that the concept of ‘myth’ is important to the “interpretation of symbolic behavior.”<sup>31</sup> It may not be surprising that his 1969 definition of myth as “a combination of symbols, held together by a narrative, which embodies the virtually all-encompassing conception of reality – the world-view – of a group” has striking similarities to the hugely popular term ‘discourse’ in present day humanities, defined broadly as “ways of seeing the world.”<sup>32</sup>

The reading and viewing of the material has been guided by research questions that help identify gendered rhetorical strategies. The questions have been guided by a strategy for analysis of gendered discourses outlined by Dorte Marie Søndergaard and tools for text analysis outlined by Norman Fairclough.<sup>33</sup> Søndergaard’s work contributes with critical

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.: 84.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.: 78.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.: 86, Sunderland, *Gendered Discourses*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Fairclough, *Language and Power*, Søndergaard, “Destabiliserende diskursanalyse.”, Søndergaard, *Tegnet på kroppen*.

questions for analyzing gender in discourse. Fairclough's framework is useful because it gives tools for reading and identifying significant images, symbols and meanings as they appear in the text. This includes the use of ideologically significant words and phrases, examples and metaphors, symbols and images, references to particular myths or discourses, as well as notions about gender and leadership. The most significant questions that guided the reading and analysis of the material were the following:

Guiding questions concerning language and discourse:<sup>34</sup>

- What classification schemes are drawn upon?
- Are there words which are ideologically contested?
- Is there rewording or overwording?
- What ideologically significant meaning relations (synonymy hyponymy, antonymy), are there between words?
- Are there euphemistic expressions?
- What metaphors are used?

Questions concerning gender:<sup>35</sup>

- What in the material could be singled out as attempts to communicate ideas about gender?
- Do the rhetorical strategies in the campaign material imply something about how the candidates position themselves in concern to ideas about masculinity?
- What codes of gendered behavior do the candidates seem to adhere to?
- What do the candidates say about their wives and children?
- What do the candidates say about other men?
- How do the candidates speak about other men?
- How do they speak about women?
- Do dilemmas arise for the candidates when they express certain strategies or opinions related to gender?

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<sup>34</sup> Selection from Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 111-13.

<sup>35</sup> Based on Søndergaard, *Tegnet på kroppen*, 77-81.

Each of these questions raised issues and concerns that have made the analysis of the text more focused, but each question is not specifically addressed in the chapters on the material.

## 1.4 Presentation and Structure

In the presentation of this thesis I have tried to weigh the concerns for accountability in the text analysis, clarity of argument and theoretical depth. This has led to a presentation where the historical background and theoretical concepts are presented before the analysis of the two elections. While the historical background should be read as my starting point for asking the questions this thesis investigates, the theoretical concepts were read, tested and applied (or discarded) during my work with the material. I present them in advance of the analysis because the argument would have become difficult to follow if it had been intermixed in the analysis chapters, and it would have been difficult to provide an in depth theoretical discussion intermixed in the analysis. In the two analysis chapters I have tried to stay as close to the material as possible through quotation with the goal of making the reader familiar enough with the material to judge the validity of my arguments.

The thesis is structured by presenting research tools in methodology and theory, two separate chapters on the two elections, and a chapter with concluding remarks. After the introductory chapter that introduces the subject and the methodology, chapter two describes the presidency as a symbolic site for gendered meaning and discusses the contributions of each of the theoretical concepts that have been significant in the development of the arguments in this thesis.

Chapter three contains the analysis and discussion of the 2000 election campaign. It suggests that the Lewinsky affair and the attempted impeachment of President Clinton inspired a campaign where the Bush team in effect argued that they would restore paternal presidentialism to the office. It describes how Al Gore in his struggle for an image apart from Clinton tried to distance himself by underlining his status as father and husband, and thus supporting the requirements of classic moral manhood for a president. Furthermore, it explores how Bush uses the impeachment as a symbol for the moral deficiency that comes with liberalism, gender-equality and Washington political intrigue. Bush tries to establish himself as independent from the failings of Clinton and Washington politics through framing

himself as an outsider with “ordinary American” Texan roots. The chapter suggests that the 2000 election campaign could have had the effect of restoring the presidency to the pedestal the impeachment process had dragged it down from, and that both candidates in different ways contributed to this restoration.

Chapter four investigates gender in the rhetorical strategies in George W. Bush and John Kerry’s 2004 campaigns. It explains how 9/11 became a symbolic site that remarkably changed the Bush presidency as well as campaign rhetoric. After the terrorist attack the symbolic position of the American president was translated into political power. The 2004 election was immersed in war rhetoric, and a discourse of masculinist protection could be traced in both John Kerry and President Bush’s messages. The chapter describes how an image of heroic masculinity emerged in the candidate’s self-presentation, and how this came to define the struggle for a masculine image compared to the opponent for both contenders.

Chapter five makes concluding remarks on the issue of gender and paternal presidentialism. It discusses to what degree the rhetoric that has been described in the analysis are available to women who seek the presidency. It tries to point out the limits, but also the possible openings for female presidential candidates that are evident in the discourse of paternal presidentialism.

## 2. Manhood and the Presidency. Theory and Background

### 2.1 Introduction

What is it about the American presidency and society that has produced only male presidents? This chapter explores the historical and philosophical foundations of gendered rhetorical strategies in contemporary presidential campaigns, and suggests theoretical tools to understand them. It describes gender power in contemporary American electoral politics through the challenges women running for office meet. This discussion leads to an exploration of leadership qualities and authority, and their links to masculinity. The discussion leads to a more specific discussion of masculinity as an object of study, which is used to find theoretical tools that could help shed light on images of manhood and gendered rhetorical strategies in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. Common for these tools, though, is that they require insights in the political and cultural setting to become useful. For that reason, the chapter has a second part that describes how images of manhood and gendered rhetorical strategies have been a part of American political history. It describes how the presidency, through its bearers and political development, has been a site for gendered symbolism in political rhetoric. This historical background will hopefully help illuminate the images of manhood and gendered rhetorical strategies that were active in the 2000 and 2004 elections. The chapter ends with a discussion of some of the research and arguments that have been put forth in gender studies on gender in contemporary American political rhetoric and its political implications for gender equality and democracy. Based on these I suggest that the facets of presidential rhetoric and campaign rhetoric that these studies address can be understood in light of *paternal presidentialism* as well as the contest of asserting manliness in opposition to unmanliness that I describe below.

## 2.2 Gender, Elections, and Leadership in Contemporary America

There are currently a record 16% women in the United States Congress. The number is still depressing for anyone concerned with gender equality in politics. In a recent worldwide ranking, the U.S.A. was 66<sup>th</sup> in female representation in the national parliament.<sup>36</sup> The starting point for many scholars in American political science concerned with gender has been: What is it about the political system that produces male dominance? The question immediately calls for a consideration of social realities: What is it about men and women in America that produces male dominance in politics? Both the inquiry about institutions and the social world have to be addressed to make sense of the issue. A wide array of research on gender and gender relations in government and politics, which implements knowledge of gender in the social world from gender studies, and knowledge of political institutions and processes from political science, has been conducted to shed light on this issue.

As the number of women who participated in elections on the state and federal level increased in the 1980s and 1990s, studies of gender power in politics grew. Coupled with studies on administration and leadership, it produced interesting findings on what difference gender makes in the selection of political leadership, which should be taken into account when studying gender in presidential elections. Studies on the media coverage of women and men running for office have shown that there are significant differences in how male and female candidates are perceived. Male candidates will generally receive more “issue” press coverage, and have more favorable ‘electability’ ratings.<sup>37</sup> Women tend to be more readily accepted as candidates for state governor than for the senate. Kahn suggests that the reason for this is that sex-stereotypes make the public prone to assume that women are considered as better qualified on “female” issues, like health care and education, while men experience a favorable prejudice on “male” issues like foreign policy and defense. Thus male privilege is more apparent in campaigns for the senate, where foreign policy is a major concern, than in contests for governorship.

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<sup>36</sup> Women in National Parliaments. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

<sup>37</sup> Kim Fridkin Kahn, "Does Gender Make a Difference? An Experimental Examination of Sex Stereotypes and Press Patterns in Statewide Campaigns," *American Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 1 (1994): 41.



This pattern is strengthened by the lessons from Elizabeth Dole's bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 1999, which show that she received less press coverage than her standing in the polls should have indicated, along with negative press on her electability.<sup>38</sup> The tendency towards negative press coverage on women candidates is also underscored by the considerable negative press Geraldine Ferraro suffered as running mate to Michael Dukakis in 1984.<sup>39</sup> David King and Richard Matland have found a tendency that women are perceived as more liberal than men when running for the Republican Party, and that this might be part of the reason why so few Republican women compared to Democrat women have been elected to congress.

The studies mentioned here link the problems women have with winning elections to various forms of gender role expectations. Kahn makes his presumption most clear, by designating "male" and "female" political issues, and suggesting that people expect qualifications in leadership and politics to adhere to that. Paradoxically, though, the stereotypes expected by voters are not found in studies on gender and leadership styles. In large studies on gender and leadership in public administration scholars have found that there does not seem to be any strong correlation between gender and leadership style.<sup>40</sup> If any significant gender differences are to be traced, it is women leaders' tendency toward a "masculine" leadership style, marked by strong authority and decisiveness.

According to Cheryl King this implies that there is a "compulsory masculinity" at work in leadership discourse which makes women highlight their masculine leadership qualities more in order to comply.<sup>41</sup> The conclusion for women who want to qualify for political leadership would be that they need to "prove" to be sufficiently dominant and decisive when running for office, but existing expectations that they will act according to women's gender role makes that more difficult than for the male contenders. In studies of

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<sup>38</sup> Caroline Heldman, Susan J. Carroll, and Stephanie Olson, "'She Brought only a Skirt': Print Media Coverage of Elizabeth Dole's Bid for the Republican Presidential Nomination," *Political Communication* 22 (2005).

<sup>39</sup> Susan Faludi, *Backlash. The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1991), 267-70.

<sup>40</sup> Cheryl Simrell King, "Sex-Role Identity and Decision Styles: How Gender Helps Explain the Paucity of Women at the Top," in *Gender Power, Leadership and Governance*, ed. Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 79.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

gender differences the unspecified focus is often on women's practices and behavior, and men's practices and behaviors were left much less scrutinized. But the finding that "compulsory masculinity" bars women's ascension to leadership positions is highly significant for studying men in those positions. Though "compulsory masculinity" is most problematic for women who run for office, it is probable that it is important to men's qualification and success as leaders as well.

### 2.2.1 Masculinism as an Analytical Tool

What is identified as "compulsory masculinity" in studies about leadership and gender provides an interesting starting point for investigating masculinity in American presidential campaigns. 'Masculinism' is described by Duerst-Lahti and Kelly as a largely taken for granted ideology that justifies male privilege in politics and other cultural spheres.<sup>42</sup> It is possible to argue that masculinism in politics is not ideology because it is not intentional or "visible" as ideology. Norman Fairclough writes in a critique of such arguments that

Ideology is at its most effective when its workings are least visible. If one becomes aware that a particular aspect of [ideological] common sense is sustaining power inequalities at one's own expense, it ceases to *be* common sense, and may cease to have the capacity to sustain power inequalities, i.e. to function ideologically.<sup>43</sup>

The result of masculinism as an embedded ideology in political culture is male advantage and female disadvantage expressed through "gender power." Gender power is not a purely political or institutional phenomenon. It largely functions through gender as a social relation and can be defined as "power and power dynamics resulting from the practices of people performing gender within the normative constraints gender modes impose."<sup>44</sup>

The concepts 'masculinism' and 'gender power' in politics have informed a lot of research on women in politics, but they also apply, be it in different ways, to men in the political setting. Arthur Brittan's 1989 book *Masculinity and Power* offers such an investigation of

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<sup>42</sup> Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly, "On Governance, Leadership and Gender," in *Gender Power, Leadership and Governance*, ed. Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1995), 21-22.

<sup>43</sup> Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 85.

<sup>44</sup> Duerst-Lahti and Kelly, "On Governance, Leadership and Gender," 20.

masculinity and masculinism that largely agrees with Duerst-Lahti and Kelly's use of the term, but also explains how masculinities fit into the ideology.<sup>45</sup>

Brittan takes issue with the confusion of masculinity and masculinism, and argues that though men's behaviors and practices that constitute masculinity are various, local, and constantly changing, this is not the case with masculinism, which in our time seems to be a rather constant ideology despite men's various ways of expressing themselves. Fashions in masculinity, he notes, does not seem to fundamentally change the gender order.<sup>46</sup> If we accept that there is an ideology of 'masculinism' at work in the political system, can it be turned against men by men? The analysis in this thesis suggests that it can, through disassociating other men with the dominant ideals of manhood to the extent that it becomes difficult for them to "qualify" within the masculinist framework. Brittan's work was one of the early important works in the field "men and masculinities studies," which seeks to study men's practices in light of gender, a field that has important contributions to the study of masculinity in political discourse.

### 2.2.2 Men and Masculinities

Feminist studies of men and masculinities have been concerned with describing men as beings with a gendered particularity, rather than ungendered universality. Scholars in this tradition have claimed that though social science has been overly concerned with men, the notion of rational male universality they have used has been based on the experiences and points of views of a particular group of men, namely white bourgeoisie, educated, western men.<sup>47</sup> Women and minorities are certainly "othered" in this system, but so are non-hegemonic males. There are different traditions in men and masculinities studies and far from all are pro-feminist, but it is the work within gender studies and the feminist tradition that is of most interest for understanding gender power and masculinism in politics.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Arthur Brittan, "Masculinities and Masculinism," in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 2001), Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>46</sup> Brittan, "M&M," 53.

<sup>47</sup> Victor Seidler, *Man Enough. Embodying Masculinities* (New York: Sage Publications, 1997), 4.

<sup>48</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 204-16.

An elusive, but fundamental, question in men and masculinities studies has been what 'masculinity' is, as such. Barrett and Whitehead answer that "masculinities are those behaviours, languages, practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine."<sup>49</sup> The bottom line seems to be that masculinity is what people call masculine and not feminine. Though masculinities are "commonly associated with males," they are also available to women. "Qualifying masculinity" in leadership is one example of how masculine gender performance applies to women's lives, and Judith Halberstam and others have provided research on female masculine performance.<sup>50</sup> The lack of specificity in this approach where masculinity is what is spoken or performed as masculine has compelled several scholars in the field to develop a more precise understanding. R.W. Connell has contributed with the most influential approach.

There are processes that create hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization among masculinities, according to Connell. "Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted solution to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy (...)," Connell explains, but adds that hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily embodied by the most powerful of men.<sup>51</sup> Hegemonic masculinity is contrasted with subordinated masculinities. Gay men are the most "conspicuous" example of this, but "wimps," "nerds" and a number of other derogatory terms for men also hold this position, which is signified by a "symbolic blurring with femininity."<sup>52</sup> The definition of masculinity as an archetype that has been common in gender role theory has been widely criticized for the problem that few men act like Rambo, or if they sometimes do, rarely identify as a Rambo type.<sup>53</sup> Though the hegemonic masculinity theory could suffer from a similar critique, Connell specifies the picture by arguing that many of men's practices should be understood in light of complicit masculinity, meaning that they

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<sup>49</sup> Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett, "The Sociology of Masculinity," in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Oxford, UK: Polity, 2001), 15-16.

<sup>50</sup> Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Connell, *Mas*, 75.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-79.

<sup>53</sup> R. W. Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity," in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 2001), 33.

gain from hegemony and comply with hegemony, but do not perform the “naked authority” of hegemonic masculinity. The three modes of masculinity accounted for are “internal to the gender order,” but should be understood in light of other social factors. Class and ethnicity, Connell notes, define who is “authorized” to hold hegemonic masculinity, as black men in America illustrated in the million man march on Washington slogan “I am a man.”<sup>54</sup>

It is possible to apply Connell’s framework to a study of masculinity in presidential campaign rhetoric, but some precautions should be taken. In the case of the 2004 election, one might argue within this framework that George W. Bush sought to perform a hegemonic “dominance” masculinity based on strength, toughness and decisiveness, and frame his opponent as a man with a “subordinate masculinity,” as a ‘wimp’ or an ‘intellectual egghead.’<sup>55</sup> Given such an analysis: did George W. Bush win in 2004 because he had most successfully performed the gender practice which embodied “the currently accepted solution to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy?”<sup>56</sup> There is some merit in this argument, but some problems should be addressed.

Firstly, the argument encourages a general understanding that the candidate with the most “currently accepted” performance of male dominance is more likely to be elected. This is an assumption repeated in news coverage enough to be familiar, but it also produces the unfavorable and limited press coverage of female candidates that Kahn, Carroll, et al. describe in their studies. Secondly, the analysis exaggerates the presidential election as a kind of vote about what the currently hegemonic masculinity in America is. It assumes that George W. Bush’s “dominance masculinity” embodies the hegemonic masculinity largely because the vote indicates that the public favored his performance in front of Kerry’s.<sup>57</sup> This provides a troubling circularity. The reasoning suggests that dominance masculinity was a beneficial masculine performance in the election because George W. Bush won, and accordingly that George W. Bush won because he performed dominance masculinity. An

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<sup>54</sup> Connell, *Mas*, 79-80.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>57</sup> In the case of 2004 George W. Bush’s successful “subordination” of John Kerry’s masculinity is certainly an indication that GWB’s effectively performed hegemonic masculinity in the election. Still, generalization of this analysis might just as well lead to the problematic conclusions I address.

analysis of how gender performance influences election has to allow that other factors than masculinity might be more important to the outcome, and thus allow for the possibility that women or men who perform subordinate, complicit or just non-hegemonic masculinities may be elected. One need not go further back to the 1996 election contest between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole to be forced to consider this problem. Ideas about masculinity in society, hegemonic or other, influence the self-presentation and rhetorical strategies of the candidates in the election. They are social conditions for the messages they want to get out to the public. Still, that does not mean that they are recipes for success or failure. In my analysis I will not try to label images of manhood in positions in Connell's framework, but I will use the idea of a competition and process of definition of masculinities in relation to each other as a frame of understanding.

If one views the concepts hegemony and subordination in relation to the need to achieve "qualified masculinity" for leadership, this becomes clear. In the 2004 election George W. Bush certainly had a rhetorical practice where he sought to qualify his own masculine performance through discrediting John Kerry's with claims that he was wishy-washy and not able to act independently as a leader in relation to other countries.<sup>58</sup> The relation between hegemony and subordination is related to the concepts 'manliness' and 'unmanliness' that Claes Ekenstam uses to explain men's social history in Scandinavia. Ekenstam criticizes Connell's framework for being too tightly knit with the power relations between men and women to really inform relations among men well enough.<sup>59</sup> Manliness, understood as an ideal image of masculinity in a particular social and historical setting, can certainly be contrasted with femininity, but also with unmanliness, Ekenstam notes. With reference to Michael Kimmel's account of manhood in American history, he argues that taking unmanliness into account underscores the significance of male homosociality in

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<sup>58</sup> See Bush/Cheney2004, *Windsurfing* [Campaign ad] (The American Museum of the Moving Image. The Livingroom Candidate, 2004 [cited November 19 2006]); available from [http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav\\_action=election&campaign\\_id=178](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav_action=election&campaign_id=178). or Bush/Cheney2004, *Wolves* [TV] (The American Museum of the Moving Image. The Livingroom Candidate. , 2004 [cited November 19 2006]); available from [http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav\\_action=election&nav\\_subaction=overview&campaign\\_id=178](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav_action=election&nav_subaction=overview&campaign_id=178). for examples, or even chapter four of this text.

<sup>59</sup> Claes Ekenstam, "Män, manlighet och omanlighet i historien," in *Män i Norden. Manlighet och modernitet 1840-1940*, ed. Jørgen Lorentzen och Claes Ekenstam (Riga: Gidlunds Forlag, 2006), 43. My translations from Swedish

modern America, which describes how men seek support for their gender performance in other men.<sup>60</sup>

There are methodological strengths to seeing manliness in constant negotiation with unmanliness, Ekenstam writes. Manliness will more often be expressed through the “rhetoric of unmanliness” which defines what it is not, rather than expressed as a desirable ideal. “Giving men the stamp ‘unmanly’ could be seen as a part of the same process that subordinate women and legitimizes male power and authority” he comments.<sup>61</sup> Thus his framework specifies the notion that one has to embody “qualified masculinity” to achieve leadership regardless of sex, and that though the struggle to achieve it is easier for men, they do face what Ekenstam calls the “fear of falling” into unmanliness as a part of this qualification. Ekenstam’s framework coupled with Connell’s insights about masculinity in the gender order provide good tools for analyzing the function of masculine rhetoric in election campaigns.

With the complexity of men and masculinities above in mind, it is important not to forget that masculinity is inherently defined in opposition to femininity. Both Ekenstam and Connell acknowledge a “symbolic blurring with femininity” in their countertypes, but are wary of the simplicity of the lack of specificity concerning masculinity in the masculine/feminine dichotomy.<sup>62</sup> The term ‘manhood’ is related to masculinity, but describes positive ideals for male behavior. K.A.Cuordileone describes how the term ‘masculine’ did not become common usage in America until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that it “referred to (...) any and all male characteristics, whether valued or not.”<sup>63</sup> Manhood and manliness, on the other hand, were older terms that had positive meaning and built partly on Victorian ideals. “Independence of spirit (...), strong, brave, large minded etc.,” were qualities these terms described. In addition “sexual restraint, a powerful will, a strong character,” also defined ‘manhood’ as a positive ideal.<sup>64</sup> The historical background below

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 44, Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America. A Cultural History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 17.

<sup>61</sup> Ekenstam, "Män, manlighet och omanlighet i historien," 45.

<sup>62</sup> See Ekenstam 35-36, and Connell *Mas* 78-79.

<sup>63</sup> K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2005), 11.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

shows how manhood as a positive ideal influenced the symbolic position of the president in the minds of the people.

## 2.3 Manhood in American Political and Cultural History

### 2.3.1 George Washington and Presidential Manhood

George Washington's presidency secured the president a role as one of the prime symbols of the American political system, a facet of the office that is crucial to the analysis in this thesis. Joseph A. Pika and John Anthony Maltese comment that "The hero worship lavished on Washington during his lifetime and the subsequent cult that developed in commemorating his service to the nation ensured that the presidency will always be associated with the nation's own sense of moral virtue and collective destiny."<sup>65</sup> In the myth about George Washington it is especially his success as the commander of American forces and stainless record as the first President, followed by his willingness to retire to private life after two terms in office that makes him something of an unparalleled communal hero to the nation, the father of his country.

The "father" image is by no means accidental. The Executive that the Founders set up was inspired by the notion of the benign patriarch, a notion of manhood that was favored at the time. Michael Kimmel likens Washington to a "Genteel Patriarch," meaning "a Christian Gentleman" that "embodied love, kindness, duty and compassion, exhibited through philanthropic work, church activities and deep involvement with his family."<sup>66</sup> The archetypical genteel patriarch was a plantation owner, much like Washington himself. Though this ideal of manhood would lose hegemony among the general public at a later point in history, it remained an important ingredient in ideal presidential image, due to the continued importance of the founding fathers as political ideals.

Executive power was not as such very popular in revolutionary America, but the knowledge that George Washington could almost certainly become the first president made

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<sup>65</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 83.

<sup>66</sup> Kimmel, *MA*, 13.



the delegates at the Constitutional Convention more readily accept strong executive power.<sup>67</sup> The Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia from May 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 17<sup>th</sup> 1787 settled for a single executive officer who was granted the powers of Commander in Chief of the armed forces, chief diplomat, chief administrator, chief legislator and chief magistrate. Congress was granted the right to declare war, to approve or reject the President's nominations for public offices and to approve treaties with foreign nations. The President's legislative power was on the outset a negative power of the veto (that could be overturned by congress), not the kind of legislative leadership and initiative that developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, Article II of the Constitution is significantly vaguer concerning the limits of presidential power than is the case with the articles on congressional and judicial power. The fact that the president's powers are not explicitly limited in the constitution was a precondition for the expansion of executive power in American political history.<sup>68</sup> At the outset the President's actual powers were small compared to the symbolic significance the office had in the newly designed political system. This may have created a disparity between the expectations to presidential power and the president's actual influence that one later sought to mend with increased presidential power.<sup>69</sup>

The symbolic facets of the presidential authority can be further explored through the notions about authority and leadership in western cultural history that the making of the office was influenced by. Max Weber asserts that there are three justifications for power and authority that a political leader must draw on one or more of to claim legitimate leadership: traditional, charismatic and legal authority.<sup>70</sup> The Presidency is vested with all three, as I will show in the following paragraphs. Weber writes:

First, [there is] the authority of “the eternal past,” of *custom*, sanctified by a validity that extends back into the mists of time and is perpetuated by habit. This is “traditional” rule, as exercised by patriarchs and patrimonial leaders of the old style.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Michael Nelson, ed., *The Evolving Presidency* (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>68</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> As is argued in Hinckley, *The Symbolic Presidency*.

<sup>70</sup> My account of the three modes of authority is based on Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *Max Weber. The Vocation Lectures.*, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

The ‘founding fathers’ sought to build a political system based on the lessons of European history, from ancient Greece to the French revolution. Weber explains traditional authority through patriarchy, rule by fathers, and patrimonialism, rule by adult males.<sup>72</sup> This notion of authority supports the privilege of men of the property owning class, for several reasons. It was based in the ‘father’ of the household in the traditional and feudal sense, where the patriarch should be understood as the ‘father’ of all his dependants including women, children and slaves. For the founders of the constitution this image of authority was familiar. Several of them, including George Washington, filled the traditional role of patriarch in their daily lives. Men without property and money were in this system the property of other men. Unless they could gain resources to break free and become ‘fathers’ themselves, they were ‘subjects’ under another man’s jurisdiction. Furthermore, the face of traditional authority in America is white, even protestant and western European at its core. It is a source of authority that historically has been restricted from black and Native American men.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Weber acknowledges that patriarchy has been replaced by patrimonialism, and thus that the qualifications for making use of traditional authority are less strict. This development also took place in American political history, but there is still quite some merit in the leadership image of “the eternal past” in the study of the presidency. The fact remains that no women or blacks have thus far been elected president. Very few with a working class background have been elected, and a successful candidate needs to raise about \$200 million in individual contributions alone to stand a chance in the race.<sup>73</sup> John F. Kennedy was the first Roman Catholic to be elected, but there is still a decided preference for Protestants.<sup>74</sup> In rhetoric, the resonance of the patriarch is equally striking. The image of the president as a “father” to the people prevails and so does the image of him as caretaker and breadwinner in the detached patriarchal fashion. The patriarch is also responsible for the *protection* of his subjects, a facet that I will return to in the analysis of the 2000 and 2004 campaigns.

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<sup>72</sup> A distinction he clarifies in Max Weber, Guenther Roth, and Claus Wittich, *Economy and Society : an Outline of Interpretive sociology* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1978), 1107.

<sup>73</sup> See Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 41.. In the 2004 campaign George W. Bush raised \$269.6 million prior to the convention, while Kerry raised \$234.6 million, according to Bob Biersack et al., *2004 Presidential Campaign Financial Activity Summarized* (The Federal Election Commission, 2005 [cited April 17 2007]); available from <http://www.fec.gov/press/press2005/20050203pressum/20050203pressum.html>.

<sup>74</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 41.

### 2.3.2 Presidential Democracy and Images of Manhood

The initial method to select a president was through state nominations and votes by the Electoral College. The democratic currents in American society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century facilitated a move away from this system, towards the still familiar model of nomination of candidates at national party conventions. From roughly 1850 to 1950 this meant that party leaders had the most influence over selecting the nominee. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though, the practice of holding presidential primary elections or more democratic caucuses developed, and became the dominating mode of selecting a nominee. The convention, in turn, became more of a campaign event where the candidate that had already won was confirmed as the party's nominee.<sup>75</sup>

The more direct form of presidential selection allowed presidents to see the people as their constituency and they increasingly depended on public support to sustain and fuel their influence, rather than cooperation with Congress. A president elected independently of Congress could also argue that he should act independently of Congress. The first president to be elected with the new party nominating system in 1828, Andrew Jackson (1829-1837), argued that "The congress, the executive and the court must each for itself be guided by its own opinion of the Constitution."<sup>76</sup> This view conflicts with the traditional strict constitutional view of presidential authority that later president William Howard Taft (1909-1913) would sum up: "[Presidential power] must be justified and vindicated by affirmative constitutional or statutory provision, or it does not exist."<sup>77</sup> Taft's view was rooted in the notion of *legal* authority, which Weber described as "the rule by virtue of 'legality,' by virtue of the belief in the validity of legal *statutes* and practical 'competence' based on rational rules."<sup>78</sup> Because he was elected by the whole of the people, and not only particular constituencies, Jackson argued that he was a 'tribune' of the people that should act on its behalf, in conflict with congress or the court if needed. Political scientist Michael Nelson states that "the attitude that the president is the people's main representative in government

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 30-35.

<sup>76</sup> Andrew Jackson, "Veto of the Bank Bill (1832)," in *The Evolving Presidency*, ed. Michael Nelson (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 2004), 81.

<sup>77</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 13.

<sup>78</sup> Weber, "PV," 34.

took root widely and deeply in the American political system” after Jackson first set this precedent, and this development facilitated arguments for broadened executive authority similar to Jackson’s.<sup>79</sup>

The changes in American political culture that led to democratization of the presidency coincided with a larger change of masculine ideals in America, Kimmel argues. He exemplifies this through descriptions of Andrew Jackson as a crude, “uncouth looking personage” who was a man of few words, but much temper. He was the “champion of the heroic artisans” in society, of working men that were not educated, but who knew the value of hard work.<sup>80</sup> Kimmel explains how the political ideal of genteel manhood of the traditional propertied upper class was displaced by the “heroic artisan” ideal of crafting and farming men and men from the west, and how the push for democratization of the presidency had an important constituency in men of the frontier.

These changes in society could be traced in the election rhetoric in 1840, Kimmel writes. He describes a startlingly familiar rhetorical practice from the election between President Martin Van Buren and challenger William Harrison. Harrison’s supporters argued that the president was a man “who wore corsets, put cologne on his whiskers, slept on French beds, rode in a British coach and ate from golden spoons from silver plates when he sat down to dine in the White House.”<sup>81</sup> This argument certainly shows that framing one’s opponent as unmanly and effeminate had political currency at earlier points in presidential history that bears comparison to that of today. It also suggests a tenuous link between masculinity and class in political rhetoric. Van Buren was blamed for being continental, French even, and having too fine habits.<sup>82</sup> In the 1840 rhetoric one can trace a negative effeminacy allocated to the property owning upper class. It seems Harrison thought it manlier to be a hardworking, log-cabin delving, uncouth looking middle class American.

The parallels to the 2004 shadow campaign against John Kerry are strikingly obvious. One smear campaign ad featured interviews with mock Frenchmen claiming their support for

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<sup>79</sup> Nelson, ed., *The Evolving Presidency*, 79.

<sup>80</sup> Kimmel, *MiA*, 24.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

Kerry.<sup>83</sup> Tom DeLay, Conservative Majority Leader in the Senate at the time, opened a 2004 campaign speech with the message: “Good morning, or, as John Kerry would say ‘Bonjour’.”<sup>84</sup> Both the 1840 example and the similar use of “French” taste as a discrediting factor in 2004 shows how certain kinds of masculinity rhetoric can be used to simultaneously glue a candidate’s image to the upper class, and in contrast frame his opponent as an ‘ordinary American’ man. The argument draws on class and gender imagery simultaneously, and seeks to attach the unfavorable image of the ‘effeminate aristocrat’ that is a decidedly un-American figure.

### 2.3.3 The Modern Presidency

The unification of the nation that followed the Civil War strengthened the president’s symbolic capital because the office belonged to the nation as a whole. During the Civil War the President’s potential power as a national leader in times of national crisis was also demonstrated. President Abraham Lincoln raised the militia and closed southern ports, suspended the writ of habeas corpus in some areas and initiated surveillance of all mail correspondence without prior approval from Congress.<sup>85</sup> His actions were accepted by Congress later, though, and thus set precedent for broad executive authority derived from the president’s function as Commander in Chief, especially in times of war. As America emerged from the industrial revolution with a strong economy and increased significance in world affairs, that precedent would become very significant. It anticipated an understanding of presidential power as prerogative, meaning that Lincoln’s actions could theoretically be defended by John Locke’s theory of executive prerogative. In his *Second Treatise on Government* he states that prerogative power is “the power to act according to the discretion of the public good, without the prescription of the law, and sometimes even against it.”<sup>86</sup> This understanding of the executive’s role implies that the president at any ordinary time can do anything that the constitution does not explicitly forbid him to do, and in extra-ordinary

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<sup>83</sup> Stevens Reed Curcio and Potholm, “Only Thinner,” (American Museum of the Moving Image, 2004).

<sup>84</sup> Susan Milligan, “Kerry criticized for French connection,” *The Boston Globe*, April 12th 2004.

<sup>85</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 377.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

times even that. The precedent set by the civil war was mirrored by the actions of the Bush administration after the terrorist attacks on 9/11/2001.

Though the concern for increasing presidential power was evident since Andrew Jackson first asserted the notion of the president as main representative of the whole people, the potential power in these changes in the political system would not become fully manifested until Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency. Authors in American government Lowi and Ginsberg state that "During the 1930's, the growth of the national government through acts delegating legislative power tilted the American national structure away from a Congress-centered government toward a president-centered government."<sup>87</sup> Through assuming the responsibility of the nation's problems in the Great Depression, FDR also assumed the power needed to conquer them. Presidential scholars Milkis and Nelson quote FDR:

It is to be hoped that the Executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us... But in the event that Congress shall fail to take [action] ... I shall ask the Congress for one remaining instrument to meet the crisis – broad executive power to wage war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.<sup>88</sup>

Through using the terms "wage war against emergency" FDR argued that the President should be able to acquire the same powers in the national economic crisis it faced as he could have if the nation was at war. The Commander in Chief's responsibilities in war time, though, can easily be traced in the constitution. Presidential power and initiative in national legislation in the fashion FDR dealt with it, though, could only be justified because of a series of historical developments.

FDR initiated the era of the "modern presidency." Presidential scholar Fred I. Greenstein argues that the four main characteristics of the modern presidency are that 1) "modern presidents have far greater formal and informal power to make decisions on their own initiative" through direct executive orders, vetoes and nominations, 2) "modern presidents have become the chief agenda setters in federal-level policy making," 3) "modern

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<sup>87</sup> Theodore J. Lowi and Benjamin Ginsberg, *American Government : Freedom and Power*, Brief 7th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 133.

<sup>88</sup> Sidney M. Milkis and Michael Nelson, *The American Presidency. Origins and Development 1776-2002*, 4th ed. (Washington D.C: CQ Press, 2002), 237.

presidents have been provided with a major staff and advisory capacity,” 4) “modern presidents have become by far the most visible actors in the political system.”<sup>89</sup> For the project in this thesis the president’s increased visibility has the most far-reaching implications of these factors.

Contemporary presidents and candidates for the presidency commonly see the Executive Officer as a “steward of the nation.” Theodore Roosevelt described this understanding of presidential authority stating that “every Executive officer was a steward of the people bound actively and affirmatively to do all he could for the people,” and that the president should not, as the constitutional model implies, have to look for explicit authorization in the Constitution or congress to do so.<sup>90</sup> This way of understanding the president’s role implies that the executive at all times should be concerned with public opinion, so that he can provide for the people what they want and need. The steward as TR envisioned him did not merely listen to the people, though, he was actively engaged in shaping public opinion as well. One of TR’s ambitions was to “put the presidency on every front page in America.”<sup>91</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries presidents would rarely address the voting public apart from the occasional ceremonial speech. This tradition was contested in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was fully replaced by the presidential address to the public by TR. Jeffrey Tulis calls this a change to a ‘rhetorical presidency’ where the popular appeal is one of the presidents greatest sources of power in relation to congress.<sup>92</sup>

The weekly press briefing, the State of Union speech, and all the other addresses the president gives, shape the public opinion, his image, and his agenda. This is even more so for presidential elections, when speaking in the broadest sense, is basically all a candidate can do. Presidential scholar Richard E. Neustadt has famously argued that “Presidential *power* is the power to persuade.”<sup>93</sup> His point is not that the president does not have direct powers, but that his job relies on the cooperation of people in Congress and the Court, as well as public

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<sup>89</sup> Fred I. Greenstein, "Toward a Modern Presidency (1988)," in *Understanding the Presidency*, ed. J. P. Pfiffner and R. H. Davidson (New York: Pearson Longman, 2002), 39.

<sup>90</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 13-14.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>92</sup> Jeffrey Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 6-7.

<sup>93</sup> Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power. The Politics of Leadership* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1960), 23.

sentiment. Still, his “status” and “authority (...) adds something to his persuasiveness,” so this power “amounts to more than charm or reasoned argument.”<sup>94</sup> The office’s symbolism emboldens his words and his claim to power, but so does his public support in a political reality with constant attention to favorability ratings. With the development towards a stewardship presidency in which political communication to the electorate gained increased importance, the president’s claim to power to a larger degree relied on his *performance* as leader of the country, as it appears to the public. Within this political reality, a president’s public image becomes crucial to his success. The stewardship presidency thus relies on *charisma* as a source of authority. Weber describes charismatic authority as:

the extraordinary, personal *gift of grace* or charisma, that is, the wholly personal devotion to, and a personal trust in, the revelations, heroism, or other leadership qualities of an individual. This is “charismatic” rule of the kind practiced by prophets or – in the political sphere – the elected warlord or the ruler chosen by popular vote, the great demagogue, and the leaders of political parties.<sup>95</sup>

A “ruler chosen by popular vote” through the means of “demagoguery” needs this “personal trust” based on his “heroism” or other outstanding leadership qualities. The authority charisma imbues the president with, and how much of it he wields at any moment in time, is crucial in his negotiations with Congress, the media and other powerful interests.

Charismatic authority is personal, as opposed to legal and traditional authority. It depends on the impressiveness of his person, to put it bluntly. The story a candidate tells about himself, the man’s “self-making,” and the lessons he offers to the people based on it, are crucial to his success within this framework.

No president in American history has framed his masculine performance and self-presentation as crystal clear as TR, and because of this his speeches offer valuable insights into the function of masculine self-presentation as a source to charismatic authority in political rhetoric. When he as Vice President assumed the role of President in 1901, after the death of his predecessor President McKinley, Roosevelt’s self-making, from weak and sickly boyhood to strenuous manhood, was already quite famous.<sup>96</sup> In numerous speeches and

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>95</sup> Weber, “PV,” 34.

<sup>96</sup> Kim Brinck Johnsen, “Playing the Man: Masculinity, Performance and U.S Foreign Policy 1901-1920” (Dissertation, University of New Hampshire, 2004), 47.



books, he told the story of how he defeated the asthmatic sickliness of his youth with the medicine of outdoor life, the manly sport of boxing and other physical excesses. As a young man he ventured to see the last of the “west” to ride horses, live with nature, and get a taste of the manly life on the frontier.

Though TR’s trip out west lasted merely six months, the myth of his self-making influenced his entire political career. It provided a storyline for the need for individual men as well as the nation to be able to rise to the manly duties of war, as well as providing for the family.<sup>97</sup> In his 1901 speech “National Duties” he stated:

Exactly as each man, while doing first his duty to his wife and the children within his home, must yet, if he hopes to amount to much, strive mightily in the world outside his home, so our nation, while first of all seeing to its own domestic well-being, must not shrink from playing its part among the great nations without.<sup>98</sup>

TR repeatedly warned against becoming a nation that would ‘shrink’ from its responsibilities in the world. America should take a firm and strong position in world affairs, and not bend to other nations’ wishes out of fear of conflict. In “The Strenuous Life” he argues:

In the West Indies and the Philippines alike we are confronted by most difficult problems. It is cowardly to shrink from solving them in the proper way; for solved they must be, if not by us, then by some stronger and more manful race.<sup>99</sup>

This quote reveals not only an enthusiasm to take responsibility of political affairs in the Western hemisphere, but also the nervousness linked to the possibility that some ‘other race’ might be more manful than American men.

In 20<sup>th</sup> century America the “heroic artisan” lost sway to a “self-made man” ideal, Kimmel argues. Set in an urbanizing, capitalist economy, the self-made man goes out into public life to prove himself. He is “mobile, competitive, aggressive in business,” as well as “temperamentally restless, chronically insecure, and desperate to achieve a solid grounding for masculine identity.”<sup>100</sup> In emerging capitalist America, where the city as much as the

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<sup>97</sup>Read accounts of this in Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, 22-24, Johnsen, “Playing the Man: Masculinity, Performance and U.S Foreign Policy 1901-1920”, 45-60, Kimmel, *MiA*, 120-24.

<sup>98</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “National Duties,” (Minnesota: 1901).

<sup>99</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life* (1900 [cited November 17 2006]); available from <http://www.bartleby.com/58/1.html>.

<sup>100</sup> Kimmel, *MiA*, 17.

west became a “frontier” where men could travel to make their fortune, the Self Made Man’s masculinity prospered and permeated both political and social life. TR’s published stories of his self-making that reasserted his uniqueness and heroism throughout his political life could be seen as an early example of how facets of modern masculinity worked in relation to charismatic political authority and a political office increasingly reliant on political communication for success.

Modern presidents are, as Greenstein notes, marked by their intense visibility in the national media. Furthermore, their public support is crucial to their political success, and it relies partly on their charismatic authority. Though the example from 1840 shows that negative focus on a President’s or a presidential candidate’s masculine performance is not a new phenomenon, the modern presidency might be even more susceptible to such campaign strategies due to the mentioned factors. The political situation in Cold War America showed how lack of patriotism could lead to ‘unmanliness’ and effeminacy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. K. A. Courdileone notes how postwar America was marked by a sense of panic over feminine influence in society, which led to an extreme concern for the masculinity of the nation’s men as well as the nation itself.<sup>101</sup> Effeminacy was a threat to the nation that allegedly expressed itself through ‘sexual inversion’ in men. As part of Senator McCarthy’s campaign to purge the government of Communist influence, homosexuality was labeled a ‘threat from within’, equally damaging as domestic Communists. “It didn’t really matter whether the infiltrators were homosexuals *or* Communists,” Courdileone comments, “it was taken as self-evident that homosexuals, like communists, endangered the security of the nation.”<sup>102</sup> Senator Kenneth Werry expressed the same sentiment: “You can’t separate homosexuals from subversives,” he argued.<sup>103</sup> Homosexuals were ‘subversive’ and supposedly a danger to national security because of their innate weakness and effeminacy.

Courdileone expertly traces the symbolic threads in the red and pink scare of the 1950s, and explains how McCarthy and others extracted the essence of the ‘effeminate aristocrat’ image already available in American culture to link homosexuality to an upper class position and to foreigners. The State Department was not an arbitrary target for his

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<sup>101</sup> Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>103</sup> Kimmel, *MIA*, 236.

purge. Diplomats and others in the Foreign Service were both ‘cultured’ in a continental sense, and spent enough time abroad to risk ‘corruption’. The image of the effeminate aristocrat was thus modernized, and proof of his possible corruption could be found in his sexual conduct. It is difficult, in hindsight, to understand why the House Committee on Un-American Activities was so concerned with homosexuality, but the red and pink scare certainly contributed to strengthening the notion that femininity in a man was somehow treacherous and un-American.

The Committee also made sexual conduct political currency in an unprecedented way. Courdileone argues that

many conservatives, using Anti-Communism as their vehicle, attacked modern liberalism on *moral* as well as political grounds. “McCarthyism” greatly accelerated the association between liberals and moral laxity, and that association would endure on the right. The repudiation of liberal tolerance and moral relativism would become, in varying degrees of intensity, a defining element of conservative politics for the rest of the century, reemerging with renewed strength in the Reagan years.<sup>104</sup>

This association between liberalism, moral laxity, and sexual conduct might have been at its most spectacular during the Clinton impeachment hearings, a process that had serious implications for the 2000 presidential election. Certainly, the 1950s zealous attention to communism, effeminacy in men, sexual conduct, and un-American behavior provided a cultural frame of understanding that still to some degree influences American politics. This cultural history informs how sexuality is understood in politicians’ gender performance as well as how a candidate’s views on gender and sexual politics in turn influence how he is perceived as a candidate.

## 2.4 Paternal Presidentialism

In her study *The Symbolic Presidency* Barbara Hinckley singles out the following traits as particularly significant for how a president should present himself: 1) as identical to the nation, as a symbol of the nation, 2) as identical to the government and the powers of government, 3) as unique and alone, 4) as the moral leader of the nation, one who can say what is good for the nation and the citizens. Even more important than these, though, is the

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<sup>104</sup> Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, 40.

demand for “similarity across presidents in this portrayal,” she argues, since this is crucial to the feat of a man ‘becoming’ an institution that is literally larger than life.<sup>105</sup> George Washington serves as the ultimate embodiment of this endeavor, and the example of the founding fathers is crucial to presidents and candidates who want to achieve the same effect today. Hinckley is concerned that the expectations this rhetoric puts on the office is unrealistic. No matter how much power and resources the president gets, he will not be able to guarantee economic prosperity for all, and if there is to be some democracy left, he can neither have the power to ‘take responsibility’ for every situation, nor conduct foreign policy alone, Hinckley notes.<sup>106</sup>

Many scholars concerned with gender and the presidency have used Hinckley’s study and argument to shed light on symbolism in presidential rhetoric. Dana D. Nelson argues that the presidential ideal that is at work in America has significant links to “national manhood,” a term she uses to describe the “imagined fraternity” of white men in America.<sup>107</sup> She is concerned with the consequences for democracy as well:

Our constitutionally conditioned habit of looking to the president has trained us to vest our desires in him for what we might otherwise see all around us. (...) people’s ability to deal with messier, open-ended, democratic heterogeneity is circuited through national manhood’s presidentialism into constitutionally unhealthy longing for wholeness, unity, for “democratic” homogeneity.<sup>108</sup>

Nelson is particularly concerned with the emotional facets of the relationship between the President and the people. The image of a president who can ‘solve our problems’ is problematic because it makes us vest our own power in the president rather than ourselves. The term “presidentialism” describes concentration of “symbolic power ‘not just in one party, but in one person,’” Nelson notes.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Hinckley, *The Symbolic Presidency*, 15.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-45.

<sup>107</sup> Dana D. Nelson, *National Manhood. Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 23-27.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-05.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

Lauren Berlant has described the affective relationship between citizens and government with a focus on the symbolism of citizens, rather than the authorities. She formulates a theory of ‘infantile citizenship’ to describe how citizenship in modern America has been transformed from public participation in democracy, to something one practices at the core of private life, as a result of the focus on the family, children, and sexuality in political rhetoric.<sup>110</sup> She traces how images of children are the most common representations of “ordinary people” in political campaign films,<sup>111</sup> and how political rhetoric is full of references to “the most vulnerable minor or virtual citizens – fetuses, children, real and imaginary immigrants – persons that, paradoxically, cannot yet act as citizens.”<sup>112</sup> This innocent icon of a citizen can make emotional, but not political claims on the government. If we look at the history of the presidency and what we know about presidential rhetoric, it is safe to say that this emotional claim lands in the president’s lap. The candidate for office would, if Berlant is correct, try to frame himself as a possible role model and caretaker for ‘infantile citizens.’

Mary Hawkesworth follows a similar argument when she argues that the American public is “feminized” in the Bush administration’s post 9/11/2001 discourse.<sup>113</sup> By ‘feminization’ in this context she means that Americans are placed in the position of being cared for and protected in exchange for loyalty. The protection is offered by the President as Commander in Chief, in exchange for a form of patriotism that quells certain kinds of dissent.<sup>114</sup> The masculinized wartime presidency, she argues, seems to force a patriarchal bargain on the American people. Iris Young follows a similar argument. America after 9/11/2001 has taken on aspects of a ‘security state’ that functions under the “logic of masculinist protection,” she argues.<sup>115</sup> The security state “constitutes itself in relation to an

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<sup>110</sup> Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City. Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 3-5.

<sup>111</sup> An observation that is also true about the overall picture in campaign films in 2000 and 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Berlant, *The Queen*, 5.

<sup>113</sup> Mary Hawkesworth, "Feminisme versus feminisering. Krigslogikken i George W. Bushs regjeringsadministrasjon," *Agora. Journal for metafysisk spekulasjon*, no. 4 (2006): 190-91. Translations of this text here and throughout the thesis are my own.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*: 192.

<sup>115</sup> Iris Marion Young, "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no. 1 (2003): 9.

enemy outside, an unpredictable aggressor against which the state needs vigilant defense.” It wages war with appeal to its role as protector. With reference to Berlant’s theory, Young argues that the protector position of state officials “puts the citizens and residents who rely on the state official’s strength and vigilance in the position on women and children under the charge of a male protector.”<sup>116</sup>

Young stresses that the masculine ideal at work in the logic of masculinist protection is not one of raw dominance. It is the “gallantly masculine man” who is “loving and self-sacrificing, especially in relation to women” that is at the center of this logic. He is the “good man” who protects his family from “bad men,” the one who “keeps vigilant watch over the safety of his family and readily risks himself in the face of threats from the outside, in order to protect the subordinate members of his household.”<sup>117</sup> However, he demands undivided loyalty in return for his protection. She notes that masculinist protection does not primarily function as domination over subjects, but more through a “pastoral” form of authority. Belonging to the congregation means that one has to adhere to certain rules, one of them the authority of the pastor.<sup>118</sup>

The logic of masculinist protection has gained attention in recent years because the national security politics of the Bush administration has actualized it. In the larger picture of presidential rhetoric and symbolism, though, I will argue that it expresses only part of a discourse of *paternal presidentialism*. Paternal presidentialism describes the president’s rhetoric of responsibility, care and protection of his subjects, and the emotional bond this rhetoric produces that makes the people see to the president for solutions to their problems, value and safety, which in turn leads to symbolic presidentialism. It is paternal in its function, but it is also a relation marked by the intimacy of the family. The presidential prospect’s personal life and sexual behavior is scrutinized in the qualification to the paternal position. His ‘manhood’ also seems to be tested through the most basic question: in a tight spot, will I want him to be the one that stands between me and disaster?

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.: 4.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.: 6.

Many studies on masculinity in political rhetoric have a focus on foreign policy.<sup>119</sup> While this is an important aspect, there are insights to gain from looking at domestic policy rhetoric as well. As I have suggested, the rhetoric of care and responsibility are central features of paternal presidentialism. Max Weber comments on how and why this paternal discourse seems to be linked to welfare politics. He speaks of a “patriarchal patrimonialism” that inspires loyalty and gains legitimacy from the people’s devotion rather than threat, as long as it secures protection as well:

The ‘good king,’ not the hero, was the ideal glorified by mass legend. Therefore patriarchal patrimonialism must legitimate itself as the guardian of the subject’s welfare in its own and their eyes. The ‘welfare state’ is the legend of patrimonialism, deriving not from free camaraderie of solemnly promised fealty, but from the authoritarian relationship of father and children. The father of the people is the ideal of the patrimonial state.<sup>120</sup>

As I will show in the analysis of the 2004 election, the image of the hero is quite significant in presidential campaign rhetoric in contemporary America. But so is the discourse that describes and understands the president’s job as the “guardian” of the people’s welfare. This discourse forms a significant part of paternal presidentialism.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Paternal presidentialism is not an eternal or unchangeable part of the presidency. As I have noted, it is a discourse. A way of speaking about the office, and understanding it, which I in the following chapters will argue exists today. As my historical account shows, parts of this discourse are as old as the office. The notion of the president as the father of the nation, and the tendency to view the president as larger than life, emerged with George Washington’s presidency. Furthermore, the ideal of the ‘genteel patriarch’ that was dominant at the time of the founding fathers influenced the symbolism that initially coated the office.

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<sup>119</sup> See i.e. Hawkesworth, “Feminisme versus feminisering. Krigslogikken i George W. Bushs regjeringsadministrasjon.”, Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America. Gender and the Vietnam War.*, ed. Kathleen Woodward, vol. 10, *Theories of Contemporary Culture* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis University Press, 1989), Johnsen, “Playing the Man: Masculinity, Performance and U.S Foreign Policy 1901-1920”, Cynthia Weber, *Faking It: U.S. Hegemony in a “Post-phallic” Era* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

<sup>120</sup> Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics. A Feminist Reading in Political Theory* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1988), 134-35. The quote is originally from Weber, Roth, and Wittich, *ES*, 1104.

However, the notion that the president is “a steward of the nation” did not come into full bloom until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It rested on the democratization of the presidency, which made it possible for the president to see himself as a representative for all the people. With the stewardship presidency came the notion of ‘responsibility’ for the well-being of the people, that FDR showed the potential of during his time as president. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, rhetoric also came to the center of presidential politics. With the public following as a source of power in dealings with Congress, the authority derived from charisma might have become even more important. As charismatic authority rests on the uniqueness of the leader, the personal stories of self making and heroism might have gained increased significance as part of presidential elections. Though presidential candidates have performed their potential presidential manhood in elections throughout American history, modern televised presidential campaigns increase the outlets of this performance. The last two decades in American politics have been marked by a turn towards the family, its values, and the importance of care. With it, the focus on the candidates’ family life as well as their capability of caring for the people has been thoroughly addressed in campaigns. In the last few years, however, the rhetoric of heroic protection has been even more visible. They are both integral in paternal presidentialism. This history and the concept of paternal presidentialism can hopefully help understand gender in contemporary campaign rhetoric. However, it will by no means explain it all.

As the theory on leadership, men and masculinities, and several of the historical accounts in this chapter suggest, an important facet of gendered rhetorical strategies in presidential campaigns seems to be the simple need to assert one’s own manliness in opposition to the opponent’s unmanliness. This could take the form of creating an image of manhood of oneself, i.e. the logcabin man, that one argues that the opponent is the countertype of, i.e. effeminate aristocrat. This is not only a rhetorical game, it stems from the need to perform a “qualifying” amount of masculinity to gain trust as a leader, as several researchers on gender and leadership have noted. The masculine self-presentation of a candidate can thus be understood as a way to make clear that he qualifies in the masculinist system, as well as a way of defining the manly virtues he thinks are important to the office he wants to qualify for. The definition of manly virtues needed for the office could in turn be used as a base of attack on the opponent, for not having those virtues.

Paternal presidentialism and the logic of masculine qualification as it is described by Connell and Ekenstam provide a framework for understanding the most common gendered rhetorical



strategies in presidential campaigns, and I will use the concepts provided here to analyze them in light of the social context they occur in. However, no theoretical frameworks, even if one allows several, can aptly describe and explain reality fully. Thankfully, reality is generally more complex than that.

### 3. Moral Manhood in the White House

#### *Al Gore and George W. Bush's 2000 Campaign Rhetoric.*

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the masculine ideals and gendered rhetorical strategies that can be traced in Al Gore and George W. Bush's election campaign rhetoric in 2000. It describes the candidate image the campaign teams tried to communicate early in the campaigns, and discusses these in relation to the notions of qualifying masculinity and paternal presidentialism. It suggests that there was an orientation towards an ideal of a manhood of moral restraint evident in both campaigns. The Republicans tried to use the attempted impeachment of incumbent President Clinton and the Lewinsky affair to spread doubt about Al Gore's leadership capabilities. Gore, on the other hand, presented himself as the paragon of moral rectitude and fidelity, who struggled at length to distance himself from President Clinton. This rhetoric can be understood as a return to the ideal of Victorian manhood, so closely connected to the upper classes, and those with the means to behave as genteel patriarchs. George W. Bush's repeated promise to "return honesty and dignity to the White House," could in this light be seen as a promise to return the fantasy of the president as larger than life, which is so crucial to the affective logic of paternal presidentialism.<sup>121</sup> Bush did not, however, frame himself as an upper class aristocrat, but rather as a Texan "cowboy." Texas was a symbol for the values of rural America in Bush's rhetoric, which also carried an image of rugged masculinity. Through coupling this with a self-presentation as a deeply religious man, he might have managed to mix his Texan background, Christianity and upper class standpoint to a good rhetorical starting point for attacks on several accounts. Gore, an experienced and knowledgeable politician, did not want to lower himself to Bush's level of debate, and refused to discuss the character issues Bush brought up in the debates unless he was pressed hard. The chapter explores the understanding of gendered rhetoric in the 2000

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<sup>121</sup> See i.e. George W. Bush, *Acceptance Speech at the Republican convention* (www.cnn.com, 2000 [cited November 17 2006]); available from <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/conventions/republican/transcripts/bush.html> 9.

election as both an attempt to resurrect paternal presidentialism, and as a contest between the masculine ideal of technical expertise, represented by Gore, and that of strength and unwavering resolve, represented by Bush.<sup>122</sup>

### 3.2 "Al Gore: Married 33 years. Father of Four. Fighting for Us."

Al Gore has been characterized as one of the most energetic and powerful Vice Presidents in American history. Born in 1948 with a congressman father he grew up partly in Washington D.C. and partly in Tennessee. After attending Harvard and Vanderbilt Colleges, and serving in the Army as a field reporter in Vietnam, Gore worked as a journalist before he ran for congress. He married Mary Elizabeth Aitcheson, later known as Tipper Gore, in 1970.<sup>123</sup> As an immensely knowledgeable and experienced candidate with impeccable faith in core Democratic values, he was the frontrunner in the Democratic nomination, and won with a comfortable margin over his major opponent Bill Bradley.

Gore called his major biographical campaign film in the 2000 election *1969*.<sup>124</sup> The film shows a life narrative that is both personal and political, where those two aspects of Gore's life intersect and reinforce each other. The film's first section was set in the politically contested atmosphere of the 1960s. With stock footage of riots, strikes, and policemen with batons, the announcer emphasized that even though "his father opposes the Vietnam War (...) Al Gore enlists in the army."<sup>125</sup> When he came home from Vietnam, Gore "starts a family with Tipper – becomes an investigative reporter." The footage in this section showed Tipper and Al with children, presumably from the campaign trail. "Then Al Gore decided that to change what was wrong with America, he had to fight for what was right," the film stressed, and continued to explain how Gore would fight for everyone in society, not

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<sup>122</sup> See Connell, *Mas*, 194. for a description of the conflict between "technical expertise" and "dominance" masculinity.

<sup>123</sup> [www.algore.com](http://www.algore.com), *Al's Bio* ([www.algore.com](http://www.algore.com), 2007 [cited April 17 2007]); available from <http://www.algore.com/bio.html>.

<sup>124</sup> Gore/Lieberman2000, *1969* [Campaign Ad] (American Museum of the Moving Image. The Livingroom Candidate. Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2004, 2000 [cited November 17 2006]); available from [http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav\\_action=election&nav\\_subaction=overview&campaign\\_id=177](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav_action=election&nav_subaction=overview&campaign_id=177).

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

only the rich. The film ended with the statement: “Al Gore. Married 30 years. Father of four. Fighting for us.”

The film *1969* portrays Al Gore as a noble and daring man who stands for the core family values in America and is willing to serve his country at all times, even when it might put himself in danger. The storyline of his journey to Washington turns from brave and humble youth, to adult responsibility symbolized by parenthood and the choice of serving the nation as a politician. His service in Vietnam and his devotion to his family serve as witnesses of his suitability for the presidency. Gore is capable of making tough decisions in difficult times and stand up for his nation, even when those closest to him disagree, the film communicates through the example of how Gore went to Vietnam in spite of his father’s doubts. He did not take the easy way out like so many other young men with his background, George W. Bush included. The choice symbolizes strength and determination, as well as proof that he is *literally* willing to fight for his people. The story is picture perfect, and communicates that Gore is a candidate that stands for adult responsibility and family values.

In his acceptance speech to the Democratic convention he underlined the link between his service to family and nation:

when our first daughter, Karenna, was born, I began to see the future through a fresh set of eyes (...) And I decided I couldn’t turn away from service at home any more than I could have turned away from service in Vietnam. That’s why I ran for Congress.<sup>126</sup>

In Gore’s narrative, he was compelled to take political office because he saw the need to help build a better society for his children. He offered to struggle for the least fortunate in society, and be their “champion” in the Oval Office.<sup>127</sup> The speech leaves no doubt that the Vice President is capable of being president, and that he would know where to start if he won the election. Through this narrative he plants the symbolic genesis of his political career in his family, and the implication is that his personal experiences as a father influence who he is as a politician. The closing statement in *1969* that stresses that Al Gore has been married for 33 years, has four children, and is fighting for “us” clearly makes this connection between

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<sup>126</sup> Al Gore, *U.S. Vice President Al Gore's Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention* (2000 [cited April 13 2007]); available from <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2000/conventions/democratic/transcripts/gore.html> 5.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.: 12.

family and politics, and implies that Gore's marital status and number of kids is part of what makes him a good candidate for president. A committed husband and father offers his resources to the American people, a man that has fought for his nation in war as well as in politics, who can be trusted with the power of President.

Gore's descriptions in his acceptance speech of what he will do to help Americans in need of various forms of political reform and aid are startling in their specificity. The initial image Gore and his handlers build in the campaign was not the most imaginative. It rested on the core national values of service and family, but without any significant twist that would have made his story special, and thus inspire charismatic authority. Gore comments on this facet of his candidacy in his acceptance speech:

I know my own imperfections. For example, I know that sometimes people say I'm too serious, that I talk too much substance and policy (...) But the presidency is more than a popularity contest, it's a day-by-day fight for people. (...) If you entrust me with the presidency, I know I won't always be the most exciting politician. But I pledge to you tonight, I will work for you every day, and I will never let you down.

In spite of his scorn for the popularity contest and his at times dreary public image, Gore was very popular in the 2000 election, supposedly due to his "substance and policy," and received a majority of the votes on Election Day. Gore might very well have kept the promise above, had the Supreme Court decision about the Florida recount and the following Electoral College vote turned out differently.<sup>128</sup>

### 3.3 George W. Bush: Successful Texan Leader

When George W. Bush was reelected as Texas Governor in a landslide 1998 election, where he received 69% of the votes, he proved to be a successful governor in spite of little prior experience in elected office.<sup>129</sup> Before his governorship, starting in 1994, George W. Bush had been a businessman with interest in several significant oil companies, as well as part owner and chief executive of the Texas Rangers baseball team. Throughout this time,

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<sup>128</sup> Gerald M. Pomper, "The Presidential Election of 2000," in *Understanding the Presidency*, ed. James P. Pfiffner and Roger H. Davidson (New York: Pearson Longman, 2000).

<sup>129</sup> Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference. Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton*, First Princeton ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 275-77.

though, he was involved in Republican campaigns, especially those of his father.<sup>130</sup> George W. Bush was born in 1946 as the first-born of former president George H.W. and Barbara Bush. His parents moved to Texas when he was a child. Bush graduated from Harvard Business School with a Master's degree in Business Administration in 1973 after having served in the National Guard at a safe distance from the Vietnam War. In 1977, he married Laura Welch.<sup>131</sup> Though he entered the 2000 election as a challenger to a supposed stronger Democratic candidate, Gore, he did so representing the majority party in Congress, and with significant resources. When establishing their candidate in the public mind, Bush and his handlers seem to have employed a dual strategy of promoting his political accomplishments as Texas governor as a blueprint for what he would do as President, and addressing the need for a "fresh start" in a Washington ridden with scandals.

The first major national campaign film from the Bush campaign in 2000 was *Successful Leader*. The film's focus was almost exclusively on Bush's accomplishments as Texas Governor. "As governor, he signed the two largest tax cuts in Texas history," the film stated, with the added super-text "3 Billion Dollars in Tax Cuts." The announcer then went on to address several of Bush's feats as governor: "He reduced state spending (...), improved public schools by restoring local control, by raising standards and returning to basics. He cut welfare rolls in half...reduced junk lawsuits and juvenile crime by 38%." At the introduction of the education issue, there is footage of Laura and George Bush with scores of enthusiastic children of elementary school age. In the last section children, the Bushes, and Bush talking to men in uniform are shown. The film's closing statement, coming from the announcer, with a close-up on Laura and George smiling in the sun is "GEORGE W. BUSH- a compassionate conservative leader. A fresh start for America."<sup>132</sup>

The ad communicated that what Bush has done for Texas he would, given the chance, do for America. The film indicated what he would later spell out in his acceptance speech to

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Bush/Cheney2000, *Successful Leader* (American Museum of the Moving Image, 2000 [cited 8. jan. 2007]); available from [http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav\\_action=election&nav\\_subaction=overview&campaign\\_id=177](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav_action=election&nav_subaction=overview&campaign_id=177).

the republican convention, namely that Midland, Texas defined the leadership he offered to the nation:

But I come from a different place and it has made me a different leader. In Midland, Texas, where I grew up, the town motto was, “The sky’s the limit,” and we believed it. There was a restless energy, a basic conviction that with hard work, anybody could succeed and everybody deserved a chance. (...) That background may lack the polish of Washington. Then again, I don’t have a lot of things that come with Washington. I don’t have enemies to fight. I have no stake in the bitter arguments of the last few years. I want to change the tone of Washington to one of civility and respect.<sup>133</sup>

Texas is not just a track record for Bush, it is also an identity. In this passage he implies that there are qualities he has as a Southerner from a relatively small city to offer the Washington establishment. The Texas identity was the hub of symbolism in the Bush 2000 campaign. It was where Bush’s personality, 6 years of experience in office, and his values were situated, and to a large degree the place from which he takes his rhetorical imagery.

With the Texas imagery Bush described himself as a Southerner, who was down to earth and had the rugged masculinity of ordinary business and small town America. With the addition of his background in business, he portrayed himself as a politician willing to think big and take risks. The cowboy image that was ascribed to him during the campaign resonated with these qualities in Bush’s self-presentation. Texas also served as a symbol that was part of a dichotomy in opposition to Washington, which the Bush campaign built much of its communication strategy around. This dichotomy was a part of his effort to frame his own candidacy as that of an outsider from Washington politics. A part of this strategy was to use Gore as a foil. In his acceptance speech to the Republican convention he joked about Gore’s shortcomings, particularly his bolstered ego and lack of nerve. Through this rhetorical strategy he conjured up a dichotomy in his argument in which everything he is, Gore is not, and vice versa. I will return to this mechanism in the discussion about the presidential debates.

Another important feature in George W. Bush’s self-presentation, particularly in his speech, was the priority he gave to Christian values, care for the less fortunate in society, and a moral lifestyle. Bush’s compassionate conservatism included issues such as local control of education, supporting faith based initiatives, fighting juvenile crime, and opposing abortion

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<sup>133</sup> Bush, *Acceptance 2000*: 6.

and gay marriage. The religious aspect of the compassionate conservative message was crucial to Bush's self-presentation as a Christian man, but also for his outreach to the Christian conservative voting base, a group on which his campaign's success depended. Bush comments that this project distinguishes the new conservative party from the old. In accordance with this argument, the conservative writer Irving Kristol comments that although the neoconservative project includes "religion, nationalism and economic growth," religion is "easily the most important" facet.<sup>134</sup> The religious aspect of Bush's personal image could also have functioned as a way to uplift his image from that of the bumbling cowboy.<sup>135</sup> By not possessing the expertise or "polish" to excel and appear uniquely skilled in politics, Bush might have seemed to be uniquely honorable and moral for a politician to an important part of the electorate, because of his very authentic Christianity.

The religion Bush wore on his sleeve in the campaign helped him communicate ideals of manhood that in part were the same as those of the founding fathers. Sexual restraint, moral rectitude, and a strong power of will, as well as the moral responsibility to take care of all God's children if he could, were values that befitted the genteel patriarch as well as the compassionate conservative.<sup>136</sup> This image of a decent Christian man might have helped Bush's rhetoric of "restoring the trust" in political officials that he argued had been lost by the scandals in Washington. When Bush in his acceptance speech said that he "swears to uphold the honor and dignity of the White House" and that "the president himself must be responsible" if America is going to enter "a responsibility era," he communicated that he believed the president should set a moral example for the nation. Towards the end of his convention speech he chose to underline several facets of his personality that related this ideal, and notes that he represents a new beginning, as well as the end of political scandal.

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<sup>134</sup> Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism. The Autobiography of an Idea*. (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 356.

<sup>135</sup> See exchange on George W. Bush's "bumbling" in Commission on Presidential Debates, *The second Gore-Bush Presidential Debate* (The Commission on Presidential Debates, 2000 [cited November 19 2006]); available from <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2000b.html>: 28-29.

<sup>136</sup> See the account of this in chapter two, based on Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, 11. and Kimmel, *MiA*, 17.



### 3.4 The Election of Family Values

In his acceptance speech Al Gore argued that “There’s something else at stake in this election that’s even more important<sup>137</sup> (...). Simply put, it’s our values. It’s our responsibility to our loved ones, to our families.”<sup>138</sup> Bush answered this sentiment in a convention speech that was impressive in its flowery language about American values, including a high priority of the compassionate conservative agenda, which included the support of faith based initiatives and conservative positions on reproductive health and sexuality. In contrast, Gore argued that with all the talk of “honor” in the election, referring to the Bush campaign’s attacks, one should start to honor the people of America. He wanted to honor working families in America by raising the minimum wage, honor women through protecting their right to choose whether or not to bear a child, honor equality through protecting affirmative action, and honor victims of hate-crimes through passing tougher laws on those crimes.<sup>139</sup> These were all issues that were categorized under the ‘moral issues’ heading, and were major discussion points in the campaign.

An analysis of the turn of events in American politics that started with the Republican landslide in the 1994 midterm election and was evident in the moral conflict in the 2000 election was that “the booming economy of the 1990s and the absence of foreign threats opened way for morality to play a central role in the political battles leading up to the [2000] election.”<sup>140</sup> In 1999, Huntington states that 58% of Americans were most concerned with moral problems, as opposed to economical problems which got a meager 38% in the poll. It was “no longer [about] the economy, stupid” in contrast to the 1992 Clinton slogan.<sup>141</sup> James Davison Hunter coined the phrase “culture wars” to describe the developing situation, and argues that the disagreement in the American public on issues like abortion, gay rights, and affirmative action, is the “nub of political disagreement today” because they “can be traced

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<sup>137</sup> More important than Medicare and the other issues he talked about prior to this.

<sup>138</sup> Gore, *Acceptance*: 11.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*: 12-13.

<sup>140</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Who are We? America's Great Debate* (London: The Free Press, 2004), 355.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

ultimately and finally to the matter of moral authority.”<sup>142</sup> “On political matters one can compromise; on matters of ultimate moral truth, one cannot,” Hunter states as a rationale for the bitterness in the debate on political issues linked to the moral conflict.<sup>143</sup> The “tendency to orthodoxy” had gained ground on the “tendency to progressivism” in American culture, according to Hunter.

If the 2000 election was an expression of this conflict, however, the “tendency to orthodoxy,” or moral majority, was in a minority in America. The two sides were evenly matched, but the “tendency to progressivism” still had an edge. If one looks at signals in the discourse of values, though, there were indications in Gore’s language that he might have a point. In his acceptance speech he felt the need to underline what “family values” meant to him. This could indicate that he did not agree with the meaning the words usually had, and felt the need to redefine it, thus signaling that he was not completely comfortable with the ideology the term implied. George W. Bush, on the other hand, used the term freely and did not see any reason to redefine it. This reflects the effort that had been put into moving this term to the center of American politics that conservatives had worked on since Reagan’s presidency.<sup>144</sup> In the 2000 election, however, the issues of moral rectitude and values was impossible to discuss without taking the attempted impeachment of incumbent President Bill Clinton into account.

The basis of the House of Representative’s issuing of two articles of impeachment against President Clinton on December 19, 1998, was former Reagan administration solicitor Kenneth Starr’s independent investigation of the President’s possible involvement in the Whitewater real estate scheme that started in 1994. The investigation broadened and included former Arkansas state employee Paula Jones’ charges of sexual harassment against the President.<sup>145</sup> The Paula Jones suit was dismissed in Federal Court, but the investigation included a hearing where the President denied having had a sexual relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. The two articles of impeachment addressed how the

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<sup>142</sup> James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars. The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 42.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>144</sup> See Sylvia Bashevkin, "Facing a Renewed Right: American Feminism and the Reagan/Bush Challenge," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 27, no. Dec. (1994), Faludi, *Backlash*.

<sup>145</sup> Nelson, ed., *The Evolving Presidency*, 264.

president had lied under oath in this statement regarding his relationship with Lewinsky, and had obstructed justice when denying the relationship.<sup>146</sup> Clinton's involvement with Lewinsky became public in January 1998, and Lewinsky testified against the president in August of the same year. During the first month of the grand jury investigation the scandal took up more than one third of all network news time, and the issue received significant press coverage throughout 1998 and during the Senate impeachment trial in January 1999.<sup>147</sup> The Senate dismissed both articles of impeachment on February 12, 1999.<sup>148</sup> The shadow of the impeachment trials loomed over the 2000 election campaign, and provided a symbolic current of gender and sexuality that was highly significant for the gendered rhetorical strategies the candidates used. Regardless of how Al Gore and George W. Bush would relate to the Lewinsky affair in their campaigns, the attempted impeachment of Bill Clinton would make their presentation of themselves as male sexual beings a subject for scrutiny in the campaign.

The impeachment could be seen as a component of the "culture wars," and the issues of gender and sexuality that were significant in the 2000 campaign. Eli Zaretsky writes with such an argument in mind:

The Republicans spoke for white, male, rural, suburban and southern constituencies threatened by the social and cultural changes unleashed since the 1960s. Their real targets, never far from their words, but also never directly acknowledged, were women's emancipation, sexual emancipation, cultural "relativism," secularization (...). Clinton, the out-of-control dope- and- sex fiend was their scapegoat. If they could have gotten rid of him, a whole reign of persecutions in such areas as abortion, education, and government would have followed.<sup>149</sup>

Zaretsky's comment implies that she thinks the impeachment was only one example of the political struggle over issues of diversity and equality that had been important since the 1960s, and gained momentum towards the end of the 1990s. Though Zaretsky is overdramatic in her description of what would have happened if the impeachment succeeded,

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<sup>146</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 177.

<sup>147</sup> Marion Just and Ann Crigler, "Leadership Image-Building: After Clinton and Watergate," *Political Psychology* 21, no. 1 (2000): 186.

<sup>148</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 178.

<sup>149</sup> Eli Zaretsky, "The Culture Wars of the 1960s and the Attack on the Presidency. The meaning of the Clinton Impeachment," in *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest*, ed. Lauren Berlant & Lisa Duggan (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 10.

her frame on the impeachment as part of the “culture wars,” is sensible. The Bush campaign’s rhetorical linkages between the Lewinsky affair, moral conduct in office, and the need to have a “responsible” political era support this.

### 3.5 Al Gore’s Strategy of Disassociation from Bill Clinton

In his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles on August 17, 2000, Gore emphasized that “this election is not an award for past performance (...). We’re entering a new time. We’re electing a new president. And I stand here tonight as my own man.”<sup>150</sup> The statement serves to underline that his presidency if elected will not merely be a continuation of Bill Clinton’s. Bush contrasted this statement in his speech when he argued that “this is not the time for third chances; it is the time for new beginnings.”<sup>151</sup> The Bush campaign wanted to frame Gore’s candidacy as a continuation of Clinton’s presidency. Al Gore made it central to his campaign to avoid exactly that. He used several strategies to achieve this goal, and his self-presentation was significant among them. In his speech he presented the particularity of his candidacy in a personal narrative. The story began with his parents and their 61-year marriage. “I learned from them the value of a true, loving partnership that lasts for life,” Gore said, in implicit reference to his own 30-year marriage.<sup>152</sup> Gore’s sustained and strong focus on his own marriage, family, and stability also set him apart from Clinton, being values that the public were likely not to associate with the incumbent president after the Lewinsky affair.

James Golden argues that Al Gore applied a strategy of *disassociation* from Bill Clinton in his campaign strategy. Through what he calls “symbolic rhetorical actions,” exemplified by moving his campaign headquarters out from Washington D.C. to Tennessee, and not appearing publicly with Clinton unless it was unavoidable in the last phase of the campaign, Golden argues that Gore sought to avoid having the unfavorable parts of President

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<sup>150</sup> Gore, *Acceptance*: 3.

<sup>151</sup> Bush, *Acceptance 2000*: 3.

<sup>152</sup> Gore, *Acceptance*: 4.

Clinton's image rub off on him.<sup>153</sup> Significant themes in Gore's self-presentation support this argument. Gore did to a significant degree choose not to highlight his accomplishments as Vice President in his core presentations, in spite of the strong economy and high favorability ratings of the Clinton administration. His references to family ties, marriage, and fatherhood are strikingly frequent. It is probable that these choices stem from a concern that Gore, if viewed as Clinton's close associate, would have problems with presenting himself as a candidate that would set a good moral example, an ideal that Kinder et. al. have found to be among the eight most important positive presidential attributes.<sup>154</sup> Disassociation from his boss through eight years when launching his own candidacy for president could and should also be understood on a more general note as a strategy the Vice President used to emerge from President Clinton's shadow.

If the Gore campaign accepted the need for a presidential candidate to appear autonomous and independent, this strategy might have been chosen even if the publicized "moral frisk" of President Clinton had never happened. That being said, the impeachment trial became important to the way the Gore campaign decided to assert Al's strength and independence. By communicating Gore's difference from Clinton through the example of Gore as a very moral traditional family man, they could have effectively addressed the ideal of an independent president and a president that sets a good moral example simultaneously. The strategy led to several problems though, especially as attacks from the Bush campaign over the moral standards of the Clinton/Gore administration became aggressive, and Gore had problems defending his boss.

### 3.6 Honor in the White House

"We know we must renew our values to restore our country," Bush argued in his speech to the Republican convention.<sup>155</sup> It was a continuation of his compassionate conservative agenda, where he laid out his views on the 'moral issues' that were debated in the campaign.

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<sup>153</sup> James L. Golden, "The Clinton Factor in the Presidential Contest of 2000," *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no. 12 (2001).

<sup>154</sup> Donald R. Kinder et al., "Presidential Stereotypes," *Political Behaviour* 2, no. 4 (1980): 319.

<sup>155</sup> Bush, *Acceptance 2000*: 9.

Following this argument he commented on his own role as president: “To lead this nation to a responsibility era, the president himself must be responsible. So when I put my hand on the Bible, (...) I will swear to uphold the honor and dignity of the office to which I have been elected, so help me God.”

This concern with ‘restoring’ the nation and the honor of the presidency is interesting in light of paternal presidentialism. The moral imperfectness of President Clinton, which in this understanding leads to his infidelity and promiscuity, had somehow torn the presidency down from its pedestal and made it undignified. With the President’s publicized sex acts, the fantasy of a president that was larger than life, unique and alone, and capable of taking care of the people, was shattered, from Bush’s point of view. In light of this attack on the President’s symbolic position he vows that he will, with the help of God, restore the time-honored symbolic position of the president, to restore paternal presidentialism to the office. Bush believes strongly in his cause: “I believe the presidency, the final point of decision in the American government, was made for great purposes. It is the office of Lincoln’s conscience, of Teddy Roosevelt’s energy, of Harry Truman’s integrity and Ronald Reagan’s optimism.”<sup>156</sup> “After all of the shouting and all of the scandal, after all the bitterness and broken faith, we can begin again,” Bush asserted. “An era of tarnished ideals is giving way to a responsibility era, and it won’t be long now,” Bush concluded.<sup>157</sup>

The ideals of American democracy had been “tarnished,” and someone had to take responsibility. Bush’s quest for saving the presidency was really about saving the president’s symbolic position as a loving father-figure that solves the problems of the people, and promises that someone, larger than them, is in the government taking care of things. How much of the symbolism that coats the presidency with uniqueness and a position ‘above’ party politics, as Hinckley describes, rests on the sustained upper class origins of American presidents?<sup>158</sup> Without aspiring to give a full answer to this, I suggest that some of the problems Bill Clinton brought to the office can be explained by looking at how his working class background crashed with the expectations paternal presidentialism puts on the office.

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.: 10.

<sup>158</sup> Hinckley, *The Symbolic Presidency*, 131-32.

Toni Morrison has famously described Clinton as the first black president, and argued that “Clinton displays almost every trope of blackness: single parent household, born poor, working class, saxophone playing, McDonalds and junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas.”<sup>159</sup> He also had a sexual promiscuity that was, if not working class in its symbolism, then at least ‘unmanly’ in a classic Victorian conception of the term, an ideal that historically is difficult to disentangle from the upper class. Could it be that Clinton threatened the upper class symbolism of the presidency and the bourgeoisie ideals of national manhood when Clinton’s sexual escapades were publicized nationally? If so, this might have caused a change in the affective relationship between president and the public, through the president’s loss of parts of his symbolic superiority. That could be what George W. Bush was out to save.

The public opinion about Clinton and the Lewinsky affair sheds light on this analysis. As the news media in 1998 continued its focus on the Lewinsky affair as its number one news story, the public interest was not nearly as high. Just and Crigler write that some parts of the press were frustrated that people didn’t understand just how important the issue was.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, they note that the public was highly skeptical towards the Republican initiative to impeach the president. At the 2000 election Clinton had a steady 57% support in the voting public, and polls showed he would have defeated both Gore and Bush if he ran again.<sup>161</sup> It seems the political elite and the media was much more concerned with the breach in presidential symbolism that the Lewinsky affair inspired, than the general public. This is significant because it suggests that the affective logic of paternal presidentialism, where the people’s influence primarily works through the emotional demand they have on the president, might be a creation more rooted in the culture of manhood in the political elite who happens to tend to be elected as presidents, rather than the system, or culture, as such.

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<sup>159</sup> Dana D. Nelson and Tyler Curtain, "The Symbolics of Presidentialism," in *Our Monica Ourselves. The Clinton Affair and the National Interest*, ed. Lauren Berlant and Lisa Duggan (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 51.

<sup>160</sup> Just and Crigler, "Leadership Image-Building: After Clinton and Watergate," 186.

<sup>161</sup> Thad Beyle, *Running With, Or From the President's Coattails?* (The Polling Report January 15th 2001 [cited November 17 2006]); available from <http://www.pollingreport.com/beyle.htm>.

### 3.7 Campaigning First Ladies

Mary Ellen Guy writes that “the post of First Lady carries a social symbolic meaning that transcends the woman in office,” and one could add, much like the presidency.<sup>162</sup> “Few have challenged the symbolics of the office as much as Hillary Rodham Clinton,” she continues. Guy notes that there was complaint in several media outlets when Hillary took a formal advisory position to the President in relation to health care reform. The complaint was partly that she was not elected, a feature she has in common with every single presidential advisor, Guy reminds her reader.<sup>163</sup> The other problem, according to Guy, was the visibility of her influence. Guy quotes former Reagan advisor Michael Deaver to illustrate her point: “This is not some kind of woman behind the scenes pulling the strings. This woman’s out front pulling the strings.” The former is accepted, is the implication, the latter is not. Scores of commentators have lamented Gore’s strategy of disassociation from Clinton in the campaign, without including his disassociation from the First Lady in the analysis. If the focus on moral issues, family values, and sexuality was a part of a larger political concern, and not limited to a gut reaction to the Lewinsky scandal, this facet of the disassociation strategy is highly relevant. Hillary was the first career woman to remain so as First Lady, and a symbol of women’s equality and modern dual income families.

In the 2000 campaign, no “Hillary Rodham Clinton First Ladies” were on the ballot. Both George W. Bush and Al Gore carefully framed the public image of their spouses in the campaign as caring, loving wives and mothers, far from the career woman that Rodham Clinton was. The gender performance they communicated with their spouses was based on a “traditional” nuclear family, with the man as the head of household and main breadwinner. Their self-presentation as family men with family values relied on their wives’ roles as supportive wives, not politicians or businesswomen with their own agenda. In the material this analysis is based on, Tipper and Laura Bush are mentioned frequently only when issues that concern children are on the agenda, and the candidates try to frame themselves as husbands and fathers. They are integral to this communication strategy, and thus any flaw in their image as a mother would rub off on the candidates’ image as family men. In the

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<sup>162</sup> Mary Ellen Guy, “Hillary, Health Care, and Gender Power,” in *Gender Power, Leadership and Governance*, ed. Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 252.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.



communication strategies in 2000 Laura Bush and Tipper Gore are auxiliaries who often appear by their husband's side in pictures, as a part of this image. This strengthens the disassociation with the liberal values on gender equality of the Clinton administration, and supports the candidate's positions as men with authority and traditional heads of households.

## 3.8 Debating Presidential Character

By the presidential debates in October 2000 each of the candidates had already established their public images and priorities in the most politically interested segment of the American public. The Bush team had campaigned on a political image of Bush as Texas governor, a man who knew how things were out in the states, and did not accept the scandals and dishonesty in Washington and was going to change that. He was also presented as a religious man who knew where his heart was and cared about the values in society, and as a man with a frank, honest and uncomplicated vision for America's future. The Gore campaign had presented an image of a virtuous and loyal family man, a man that had dedicated his life to fighting for a better future for Americans. They also portrayed him as a courageous man, an independent man who went to Vietnam in spite of personal discomfort and danger, a man with a firm political agenda, political experience and expertise, as well as a commitment to the weakest in society. On October 3, 11, and 17, 2000, these images were compared and tested in presidential debates. The debates offer more insights in how the candidates present themselves in competition with each other, as well as interesting exchanges about character issues.

### 3.8.1 Presidential Manhood in the Political Setting

When asked about his opponent's character flaws in the Oct. 3 debate George Bush hastened to stress that "The man loves his wife and I appreciate that a lot. And I love mine. The man loves his family a lot, and I appreciate that, because I love my family."<sup>164</sup> The statement implies that Gore qualifies in this respect, and through likening Gore's qualities to himself he also underlines how he thinks he is an honorable person. Through Bush and Gore's

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<sup>164</sup> *The First Gore vs. Bush Presidential Debate*. (The Commission on Presidential Debates, October 3, 2000 [cited November 17 2006]); available from [http://www.debates.org/pages/his\\_2000.html#oct3](http://www.debates.org/pages/his_2000.html#oct3): 25.

simultaneous focus on being family men, with family values as a qualification for the presidency, they created a campaign-internal parameter, which they in turn can be measured by. It creates a parameter of manliness, the ideal, and unmanliness, the countertype of the ideal, that could be used as a rhetorical tool after it is established.<sup>165</sup>

In the quote above Bush suggests that Gore is suitable for office, if one bases the qualification on how he treats his family. Gore has already established his faith in this parameter for measuring presidential capability through centering his status as father and husband as the foundation for his self-presentation to the public. Through using the family as an image for the nation the candidates create a link between the real men they are, and the ideal president they want to become. The candidate is the patriarchal figure in this image, the rest of the family is the public. Gore's message is that he has been loyal to his wife and children; therefore he will be loyal to you (the electorate). The implication is that if either of them disappoints on this real and personal level, it will be a failure on the symbolic level, signaling a willingness to betray trust at other levels as well. They are linked in the communication. Bush presents a similar argument when he discusses the need to restore dignity to the White House, as discussed above.

However, the manliness/unmanliness parameter this rhetoric establishes was turned against neither Gore nor Bush in the election. It was turned against President Clinton, with the hope that Gore would be smeared by association. "If you accept the premise that the 'American Family' is, by some leap of the imagination, the basic unit of American democracy, then Clinton's actions strike at our very democracy, Tyler Curtain writes.<sup>166</sup> This leap of imagination is made by Bush and Gore in their rhetoric, and Clinton's sexual encounter with Lewinsky becomes a betrayal of the nation's trust within this framework. For Gore the strategy added a layer to his attempt to disassociate himself from Clinton. But through supporting a parameter for qualification in which Clinton would not do well, he risks validating Bush's claim that the Clinton/Gore administration was not successful. Thus, this part of his campaign strategy was highly dependent on Gore's ability to disassociate himself from Clinton in the campaign. Bush did not let the opportunity pass in the debates.

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<sup>165</sup>See account in ch. 2 based on Ekenstam, "Män, manlighet och omanlighet i historien."

<sup>166</sup> Nelson and Curtain, "The Symbolics of Presidentialism," 37.

George W. Bush addressed what he called the issue of ‘trust’ in the Clinton administration in the first debate:

I believe that—I believe they’ve moved that sign, “The buck stops here” from the Oval Office desk to “The buck stops here” in the Lincoln bedroom. It’s not good for the country and it’s not right. We need to have a new look about how we conduct ourselves in office.<sup>167</sup>

This comment addresses campaign finance and specifically a fundraiser where exceptionally large contributors could get a night’s stay in the Lincoln bedroom. Bush continues to stress that he had “been disappointed about how he and his administration have conducted the fundraising affairs.” To the average voter interpreting the text, though, there are other implications not far from the surface. Pointing to the Clinton administration’s bedrooms is likely to evoke two key notions about the role of women in that administration. One possible interpretation of Bush’s statement could be that he thinks that the First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, had gotten too much power “through the bedroom.” With the media attention gotten by the impeachment process, however, the combination of the phrases “bedroom,” “conduct in office” and “administration” was more than enough to make the listener associate the comment with the Lewinsky affair. Bush claims, through this and several other statements, that the conduct of the administration showed that they had not been trustworthy and honorable.

Al Gore’s response to Bush’s statement indicates that he picked up on the subtle references in the attack:

You may want to focus on scandal. I want to focus on results. As I said a couple of months ago, I stand here as my own man and I want you to see me for who I really am. Tipper and I have been married for 30 years. We became grandparents a year-and-a-half ago. We’ve got four children. I have devoted 24 years of my life to public service and I’ve said this before and I’ll say it again, if you entrust me with the presidency, I may not be the most exciting politician, but I will work hard for you every day.<sup>168</sup>

Gore’s inflamed response shows both that Gore reads the comment as an attack on his own personal virtues as a man running for president, and his problematic relation to President Clinton’s personal image. The statement “I stand here as my own man” in this case explicitly

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<sup>167</sup> 2000a: 25.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

refers to Bill Clinton. Furthermore, the appeal to “see him as he really is” and the following comments on his personal life and his service seem to communicate that he is a different kind of man than Bill Clinton. He further underlines this message with reference to himself as a hardworking, far from exciting, politician. This can also be understood as a contrast to Clinton who certainly was an exciting politician, both personally and politically. The real Al Gore, the implication is, is a hardworking husband, father, and grandfather that is so far from scandalous that he is even a bit dull. The strong emphasis on his family life also serves to underline that he is suited for office based on his personal values, and that this makes him trustworthy and honorable. Gore is so preoccupied with the underlying message in Bush’s attack that he makes no pretense of commenting on campaign finance conduct at all.

This exchange had several parallels in the debates. In the second debate Bush also felt the need to defend his fatherly and compassionate image by saying: “If he’s trying to allege that I’m a hard-hearted person and I don’t care about children, he’s absolutely wrong.”<sup>169</sup> The comment was a response to an argument where Gore pointed out that there were 1.4 million children in Texas who did not have health insurance. As with Bush’s attack before, the inflamed response shows an acute awareness of issues that could harm the fatherly, honorable, and caring part of his image. While the struggle to uphold one’s own credit on family virtues was important to both men, the attacks on the opponent’s character and suitability for office in the debates came almost exclusively from Bush. When challenged to comment on his opponent’s lack of experience and other flaws in the first debate, Gore actively avoided the issue and commented on Bush’s policies instead. Bush showed no such reservations in either the acceptance speech or the debates.

With a number of indirect attacks on the moral values of the current administration, including Gore, as well as on Gore’s honesty and trustworthiness, Bush showed that he was trying to discredit Gore as a potential president on the basis that his personal conduct allegedly did not agree with the ideals they both held up as requirements for the presidency. The message could be simplified to “this is what a president should be like,” and “he’s not like that” with address to Gore. Gore’s responses could furthermore be interpreted as variations of “I am certainly like that!” This structure of debate is one that reveals the manliness/unmanliness logic that is described above. Gore’s defense should be interpreted as

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<sup>169</sup> Debates, 2000b: 22.

a reassertion of his own presidential manhood. As mentioned, Bush's attacks on Gore's presidential manhood, however, relied to a large degree on his image as Clinton's Vice President, who would become a Clinton kind of president.

The concern whether this equation between the president and the Vice President resonated with the public was therefore a priority of the Bush campaign as well. Journalist Ron Fournier comments that: "Given a final word in their final debate, Al Gore said he 'kept the faith with his family' and his 30-year marriage. George W. Bush raised his right hand and pledged to 'uphold the honor and dignity' of the White House. Each had in mind the same issue: Clinton-fatigue."<sup>170</sup> There is a certain irony in the fact that both campaigns sought to distance themselves from Clinton's performance as president, given Clinton's popularity at the time of the election, and relative lack of concern in the public about the Lewinsky affair, as accounted for above. For the Gore campaign, it may, as suggested above, have been the easiest way to establish Gore's individuality beside Clinton. They could also have been led to overestimate the threat of Clinton-fatigue due to the attention in the press and political sphere to the issue. It is also an option worth to consider that many Democrats, along with Republicans, were enraged over Clinton's conduct in office and the consequences it had for presidential symbolism. Many of them were, after all, members of the same political elite as the Republicans who made the Lewinsky affair an issue of impeachment. For the Republicans, it seemed to be an ideological and political issue. It was integral to the project of restoring "values" to American society, and to restoring honor to the office of president. Centrist Democrats may very well have supported that cause, in defense of authority and nobility of the presidency.

### **3.8.2 Expertise and Sound Principles**

One of the most significant differences between Al Gore and George W. Bush in the 2000 election was Gore's formidable political expertise and experience, and Bush's lack thereof. The Bush campaign was acutely aware of this, and tried to communicate that Bush's outsider status was an asset. The notion of strong leadership that makes things happen was an important component of Bush's campaign, and this notion of leadership was also framed in

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<sup>170</sup> Ron Fournier, "Gore forcing president to sidelines over 'Clinton fatigue'," *The Associated Press*, October 19th 2000.

opposition to Washington-style leadership and political expertise. “We have too much polling and focus groups going on in Washington today. We need decisions made on sound principles,” Bush said in the first presidential debate. Again in the third debate he stated that: “You can’t worry about polls or focus groups. You’ve got to have a clear vision. That’s what a leader does. A leader also understands that the United States must be strong to keep the peace.”<sup>171</sup> These are two examples of a significant number of utterances in the debates where Bush stresses the need for strong leadership based on sound principles as opposed to opportunistic leadership based on polls. In contrast to Gore, Bush had no problems with discussing character and experience. In an answer about his opponent’s character he stated: “Well, we do come from different places. I come from being a West Texas.”<sup>172</sup> Later, after the moderator had a follow-up question on the issue, he said:

Look, I fully recognize I’m not of Washington. I’m from Texas. And he’s got a lot of experience, but so do I. And I’ve been the chief executive officer of the second biggest state in the union. I have a proud record of working with both Republicans and Democrats, which is what our nation needs. Somebody that can come to Washington and say let’s forget all the finger pointing and get positive things done (...).<sup>173</sup>

Skillfully, Bush turns his lack of political experience and definite outsider status into an asset. It is because of those things, not in spite of them, that he will become a good president. In a similar fashion to how know-how and expertise in Washington politics was not Bush’s comparative advantage in the campaign, neither was specific issue knowledge.

Instead, Bush used the Washington/Texas framework to thwart Gore’s arguments through actively associating his opponent with the perceived dishonesty and immorality of Washington, while disassociating himself with D.C. through framing it in opposition to Texas. After an attack on the specific numbers in his tax-plan in the second presidential debate Bush replied: “Look, this is a man who has great numbers. He talks about numbers. I’m beginning to think not only did he invent the Internet, but he invented the calculator. It’s

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<sup>171</sup> The Commission on Presidential Debates, *The Third Gore/Bush Presidential Debate* (St. Louis: www.debates.org, 2000), 12.

<sup>172</sup> The Commission on Presidential Debates, *Gore vs. Bush Presidential Debate. October 3rd*. [Transcript] (www.debates.org, 2000): 2. The strange grammar is Bush’s own.

<sup>173</sup> The Commission on Presidential Debates, *The First Gore/Bush Presidential Debate* (Boston: www.debates.org, 2000), 3.

fuzzy math. It's a scaring (...)." <sup>174</sup> In a later comment in the debate concerning the same issue, he stated: "This man has been disparaging my plan with all this Washington fuzzy math." <sup>175</sup> In this defense Bush framed Gore as a policy-wonk that has nothing going for himself but exaggerated facts. Furthermore, through alluding to the Republican claim that Al Gore had stated that he "had helped take the initiative of creating the internet" and adding the calculator to the list, he basically implies that Gore is a politician that is both full of himself and not to be trusted. <sup>176</sup> The message was that he did not invent the internet and whatever he said about the tax-plan is equally false. In the later follow-up Bush explicitly links the "fuzzy math" to Washington, and through that linkage he creates the communicative effect that this messing with numbers is something they do in Washington and that his Texas campaign is not guilty of the same.

In these exchanges Bush is not so much trying to frame Gore as unmanly, through not living up to their common notion of presidential manhood, but rather as a different kind of man than himself. This facet of the debates could be understood in the light of Connell's note of a competition between what he calls "technical expertise" and "dominance" masculinity in the 1990s. <sup>177</sup> The Texas/Washington dichotomy that Bush sets up works as an image that frames Gore as a northeastern smart guy, administrator, and career politician, and Bush as a southern businessman that is down to earth, like ordinary American men, not smart, but visionary enough to make up for that, and willing to take risks to achieve great things for the country. Thus Bush tries to gain credit for his own background and personal style through setting it up as a preferable alternative manhood to a technically-minded expert masculinity figure.

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>175</sup> Debates, 2000a: 17.

<sup>176</sup> The Bush/Cheney campaign ran an attack ad on the Internet comment called *Really MD* where Gore is portrayed as not entirely truthful. See Bush/Cheney2000, *Really MD* (The American Museum of the Moving Image, 2000 [cited November 17 2006]); available from [http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav\\_action=election&nav\\_subaction=overview&campaign\\_id=177](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav_action=election&nav_subaction=overview&campaign_id=177). They also had the webpage [www.gorewillsayanything.com](http://www.gorewillsayanything.com) for this purpose in the campaign.

<sup>177</sup> Connell, *Mas*, 194.

### 3.9 Conclusion

Presidential scholar Stephen Skowronek writes that “The underlying question in all presidential efforts to respond to the present and shape the future is always how much of the past (ideas, institutions, interests, and precedents) can and must be called into question.”<sup>178</sup> In the 2000 election the immediate past was called into question to restore the traditional ideal of the president as larger than life, and a father figure that would defend and care for the citizenry. Clinton, the working class president, managed to damage the carefully wrought image of mystic superiority through his breach of the norm of manly sexual restraint. The Bush campaign sought to rescue and ‘restore’ the country and the presidency from its fall from grace during the Clinton administration. The Gore campaign communicated a similar need with a campaign strategy where Gore’s capabilities as president were qualified through his “30-year marriage” and four children.<sup>179</sup> A probable consequence of this unanimous need to denounce Clinton’s personal performance as president was that the notion of the president as a moral example and role model was reinforced for the future. As the next chapter shows, the symbolic affective relationship between the president and the people would grow stronger after 9/11/2001.

Bush tried to handle Gore’s clear advantage in political expertise through creating a discursal dichotomy between Washington and Texas that had implications of expertise and dominance masculinity. The strategy has historical precedents in the attacks on upper or political class effeminacy that was discussed in chapter two. Max Weber’s notion that the welfare state and the domestic policy issues that surround it is “the legend of patrimonialism” seems to have some merit, judging from the 2000 presidential election. Though Gore won a meager majority of the votes, and Bush won the Electoral College and became president, they both did so with traditional notions of paternal presidentialism as important parts of their campaign strategies.

From a gender-equality perspective the campaign strategies used by both contenders in the 2000 election could be seen as a setback. After eight years with a liberal First Family

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<sup>178</sup> Stephen Skowronek, “Notes on the Presidency in the Political Orders,” in *Understanding the Presidency*, ed. James P. Pfiffner & Roger H. Davidson (New York: Pearson Longman, 1986), 49-50.

<sup>179</sup> Gore/Lieberman 2000, 1969.



with an equality agenda and a president who was “fed up with politicians in Washington lecturing the rest of us about family values,” the alternatives in 2000 seemed to be two “family values first” candidates, though with different policies.<sup>180</sup> In a political situation where moral concerns had superseded the national economy in the voting public’s concern, the impeachment process inflamed a political agenda that was significantly more available to use successfully for a religiously inspired neoconservative project than it was for Bill Clinton’s vice president.

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<sup>180</sup> William J. Clinton, *Acceptance Speech to the Democratic National Convention* [Website] (The American Presidency Project, 1992 [cited 16. November 2006]); available from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/shownomination.php?convid=7>.

## 4. The Heroic War on Terror

### *Masculinist Protection and Heroic Masculinity in the 2004 Election*

This chapter outlines the gendered rhetorical strategies of incumbent President George W. Bush and John Kerry in the 2004 campaign. The analysis shows how establishing an image of a good Commander in Chief seemed to be the main image-building agenda for both candidates in the election, and that both “heroic masculinity” and “paternalist protection” were ideals that were significant to this project. The surge in masculine imagery that the competition for a war presidency seems to have produced, in turn made the Bush team’s attacks on John Kerry’s masculinity central to the campaign. The significance of masculine performance in the campaign was also brought about by John Kerry, who framed himself as a war veteran seeking the presidency. Kerry’s masculine image proved to be vulnerable to attacks though, as the chapter shows through its account of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s attacks on his Vietnam record. The Bush campaign’s attacks on Kerry’s alleged indecisiveness and European effeminacy are analyzed as claims that Kerry was ‘unmanly,’ and thus not fit to be president. The chapter addresses how the incumbent President portrayed himself as a strong Commander in Chief, who is charged with the protection of the American people at a precarious time. It suggests that Bush entered a logic of masculinist protection after 9/11, where the Patriot Acts and the demands for patriotism at the time functioned as the internal condition for protection, in which the citizen becomes a feminized, or infantilized, object of protection.<sup>181</sup> Savior rhetoric in foreign policy is another facet of the logic of masculine protection, and the chapter describes how the invasion of other countries is manifested in rhetoric as the liberation of Afghan women. As a part of the discussion on masculine ideals in the election rhetoric, the chapter addresses how masculinity came to shape the election campaign to a degree where one should ask whether foreign politics and

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<sup>181</sup> In accordance with the arguments presented in Berlant, *The Queen*, Hawkesworth, “Feminisme versus feminisering. Krigslogikken i George W. Bushs regjeringsadministrasjon.”, Young, “The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State.”

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national security politics became a kind of masculine performance on behalf of the nation as such.<sup>182</sup>

## 4.1 The War on Terror Election

Had the administration made a mistake about going into Iraq? Was there a link between Al Qaeda and the Iraqi government? Did the Iraqi government have weapons of mass destruction? These were the major questions in the political scene leading up to the 2004 election. After the 'war on terror' was declared in response to the terrorist attacks on 9/11/2001, the Bush administration swiftly started their military intervention in Afghanistan. By November, 2001, the Taliban government was toppled. The argument for the war in Afghanistan was twofold: one was to destroy the Al Qaeda network at their presumed base and thus protect America from further terrorist attacks, the other was to free the Afghan people, and particularly Afghan women, from their government and its oppressive policies. The American attack on Afghanistan did not lead to the capture of supposed 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden, though, and the Al Qaeda network proved to be elusive.

In 2002, the administration's focus in the 'war on terror' shifted towards Iraq and the Baath government led by Saddam Hussein. On September 12, 2002, the president argued in front of the United Nations that Iraq posed a threat to peace because of the nation's supposed development of weapons of mass destruction. Thus the world community should disarm Iraq, for security reasons. After this speech a new security doctrine for the United States that justified preemptive strikes by the United States was released.<sup>183</sup> America would wage war against Iraq, even without support from the U.N. Security Council. At this point the argument for invading Iraq assumed the same twofold structure as the argument for invading Afghanistan: that it was needed to protect America, and that one would save and thus protect the Iraqi people from their government. In the years leading up to the 2004 election the Bush

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<sup>182</sup> As argued in Bonnie Mann, "How America Justifies Its War: A Modern/Postmodern Aesthetics of Masculinity and Sovereignty," *Hypatia. A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 21, no. 4 (2006).

<sup>183</sup> James P. Pfiffner, "The Transformation of the Bush Presidency," in *Understanding the Presidency*, ed. James P. Pfiffner and Roger H. Davidson (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), 463.

government had been on a mission abroad to protect the American people from a terrorist threat that proved difficult to find. The wars were initially based on rhetoric of protection, but soon evolved into one of 'saviorism'. The peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq were 'liberated' through the American war effort. Through the Iraq war America was taking the responsibility not only of the safety of its own people, but for the safety of the world. President Bush was in charge of the war on terror symbolically as a lethal force to those who stood against America, and a loving protector for America's citizens.

On May 1, 2003, George W. Bush stepped off an aircraft carrier off the coast of California clad in military attire and declared that the military mission that started with the attack on Baghdad March 20<sup>th</sup> the same year was "accomplished." The President argued that "the battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September 11, 2001, and still goes on (...). We have removed an ally of Al Qaeda, and cut off a source in terrorist funding."<sup>184</sup> The same day, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld went to Afghanistan to declare the end of "major combat operations" there as well.<sup>185</sup> In these well-staged performances the President and Secretary of Defense displayed themselves as successful commanders in war. But as American troops are fighting in both countries to this day, these actions should be seen as speech acts in the illocutionary sense, meaning that they were words uttered with the intention of bringing about the reality they describe as a consequence of the performance.<sup>186</sup> They could not fool those on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, but they could maybe fool American reporters and thus a share of the public. This performance points to a troubling intermixing of political reality and rhetoric, which also was evident in the 2004 election campaign.

In his acceptance speech to the Democratic National Congress on July 29, 2004, John Kerry noted that "proclaiming 'Mission Accomplished' certainly doesn't make it so."<sup>187</sup> The comment can be read as an attempt to damage Bush's performance as a successful war

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<sup>184</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 467.

<sup>185</sup> Pfiffner, "The Transformation of the Bush Presidency," 460.

<sup>186</sup> See discussion about this on p. 18, based on Butler, *ES*.

<sup>187</sup> John Kerry, *Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention* (The Washington Post, 2004 [cited November 19 2006]); available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A25678-2004Jul29.html> 7.

president when the reality in Iraq was far from perfect. At the time of Kerry's speech the number of American lives lost in Iraq had passed 1000, of which only 140 had occurred before Bush declared "major combat" over.<sup>188</sup> A majority of the American people seemed to agree with parts of Kerry's intent. In June 2004, 54% of the American people thought the U.S. had "made a mistake" about going into Iraq, and the President's approval rating was at an unimpressive 47%.<sup>189</sup> But the situation was complicated by the fact that a majority approved of the way Bush had handled the war on terror.<sup>190</sup> In the Bush campaign's rhetorical frame these "wars" were one and the same. Thus a significant proportion of the president's public support rested on the credibility of this equation.

## 4.2 George W. Bush: The 9/11 President

From September 10 to September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush's approval rating went from 51% to 86%, the highest jump ever to be recorded by American Gallup.<sup>191</sup> Under the vignette 'war on terror' President Bush was granted broad executive authority to use "all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons (...)." <sup>192</sup> By October 2001 the administration had proposed the Uniting and Strengthening of America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001, in short the U.S.A. Patriot Act. The Act included a broadened definition of "terrorist" and gave the Attorney General the option of "indefinite detention" of foreign persons suspected of terrorism, without necessarily pressing charges against such persons. The president also created an Office of Homeland Security under the Executive Office of the President, a

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<sup>188</sup> Pika and Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 398.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 409.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>192</sup> Pfiffner, "The Transformation of the Bush Presidency," 456.

provision that would later be replaced by the Department of Homeland security due to pressure from Congress.

#### 4.2.1 Protection in Precarious Times

“Weakness attracts those who are waiting to do America harm.”<sup>193</sup> This was the message of a Bush/Cheney campaign ad in October 2004. The ad showed a vast and dark forest that presumably hid unknown dangers. John Kerry voted to cut intelligence funds, a dramatic voiceover warned. The dangers that lurk in the forest are symbolized by a pack of wolves, waiting to attack the weakest prey. The most unanimous message in the Bush campaign in 2004 was that America cannot afford weakness in a time of war.

“Steady leadership in times of change” was the concluding comment on the Bush campaign ad *Safer, Stronger*, which was aired in March, 2004.<sup>194</sup> This ad also painted a gloomy picture of the political situation: “An economy in recession. A stock market in decline. A dot com boom....gone bust.” The description referred to the challenging political situation at the beginning of George W. Bush’s presidency, and introduced the 9/11/2001 theme. “Then... A day of tragedy. A test for all Americans,” the announcer in the film said, while images from the 9/11 attacks were shown in the background. He continued: “Today, America is turning the corner. Rising to the challenge. Safer, Stronger.”<sup>195</sup> In this precarious political situation America needed the “steady leadership” of the incumbent President, was the ad’s message.

The Republican campaign explicitly framed Bush as a wartime president, and highlighted the Commander in Chief function of the office. *Safer, Stronger* showed the self-presentation strategy of the president early in the election. In precarious times, the Bush administration has offered protection, and America has been safe for it, the ad communicates. Safety had been secured, domestically through surveillance and extended

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<sup>193</sup> Bush/Cheney2004, *Wolves*.

<sup>194</sup> Bush/Cheney2004, *Safer, Stronger* [Campaign ad] (American Museum of the Moving Image, 2004 [cited April 17 2007]); available from [http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav\\_action=election&nav\\_subaction=overview&campaign\\_id=178](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav_action=election&nav_subaction=overview&campaign_id=178).

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

means to identify and disable “the enemies within,” and externally through waging war against the terrorists in far places.<sup>196</sup> The accusation that John Kerry voted to cut intelligence funds in *Wolves* implied that the Senator if elected would not continue the Bush administration’s project for protecting the homeland against the dangers of terror, and thus that he would not keep the American people safe. The ad *Wolves* is more representative of the Bush team’s ads as the campaign progressed. In the last hectic months before the election a majority of the ads the campaign aired were attack ads against John Kerry, like *Windsurfing*, an ad in which the core message was “John Kerry: wherever the wind blows.”<sup>197</sup>

George W. Bush’s acceptance speech to the Republican National Convention in New York in 2004 outlined a candidacy based on strong military leadership and continuation of a domestic policy where Medicare and tax reform were the main issues. The first passage of his speech situates his candidacy in a post 9/11 discourse:

In the heart of this great city, we saw tragedy arrive on a quiet morning. We saw the bravery of rescuers grow with danger. We learned of passengers on a doomed plane who died with a courage that frightened their killers. (Applause.) We have seen a shaken economy rise to its feet. And we have seen Americans in uniform storming mountain strongholds, and charging through sandstorms, and liberating millions, with acts of valor that would make the men of Normandy proud.<sup>198</sup>

This opening passage used the same storyline about the President’s first term as the film *Safer, Stronger*. Faced with grave political challenges, serious, but bleak in comparison to 9/11, the nation rose to the challenge under Bush’s leadership. Rescuers, victims, the economy, and American soldiers found bravery in danger. That bravery had been used in Afghanistan and Iraq, the President implies, to conduct ‘acts of valor’ that would impress the bravest of men. He described the political situation with reference to an epic form of heroism, where American men in the most unusual of situations find a hero inside them. The only explicit reference to the gender of this heroism is “the men of Normandy,” but both “rescuers” and “Americans in uniform” are terms with primarily male referents. This

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<sup>196</sup> Young, “The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State,” 9.

<sup>197</sup> Bush/Cheney2004, *Safer, Stronger*, Bush/Cheney2004, *Windsurfing*.

<sup>198</sup> George W. Bush, *President’s Remarks at the 2004 Republican National Convention* (Office of the Press Secretary. The White House, 2004 [cited November 19 2006]); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040902-2.html> 1.

discourse of heroism also includes a notion of heroic masculinity: ordinary men at extraordinary times leave their homes to face death and grave danger to protect their families. The man that meets danger and death out in the world out of love for his family and his people, performs “masculinism as protection,” Young argues. The discourse frames the soldier, or the rescuer, as the savior of women and children.<sup>199</sup>

In a post 9/11 essay Judith Butler notes that “we now see that the national border is more permeable than we thought. Our general response is anxiety, rage; a radical desire for security (...).”<sup>200</sup> Put in this vulnerable state, the people craved protection, she notes. This was offered after 9/11 in the form of paternal presidentialism. The Bush administration seized the moment, and promised to fight a war on terror to keep Americans safe from harm. The war had an internal and an external facet, Iris Young notes. The enemies outside needed to be rooted out through warfare, and the enemy within needed to be fought with security policies and intelligence.<sup>201</sup> The concept “homeland security” became the core of this new political and discursive field. It described the internal and external efforts of the government to keep the people safe. As discussed in chapter two, this notion of protecting the homeland from external threat in exchange for gratitude and acceptance of the terms set by the protector is a logic derived from the patriarchal model.<sup>202</sup> The people are offered protection from other, dangerous, nations in exchange for loyalty to the nation and its leadership, similar to the tradeoff between a man and a woman in a patriarchal arrangement. The arrangement might very well have soothed the “radical need for security” in the people that Butler notes.

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<sup>199</sup> Young, "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State," 4.

<sup>200</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 39.

<sup>201</sup> Young, "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State," 8.

<sup>202</sup> See discussion on p. 44, based on Ibid. and Hawkesworth, "Feminisme versus feminisering. Krigslogikken i George W. Bushs regjeringsadministrasjon."



## 4.2.2 The Rhetoric of Saviorism

George W. Bush committed a large share of his acceptance speech to national security. "I wake up every morning thinking about how to better protect our country," Bush said about his personal commitment to the cause. To American soldiers abroad he said:

You are involved in a struggle of historic proportion. Because of your service and sacrifice, we are defeating the terrorists where they live and plan, and you're making America safer. Because of you, women in Afghanistan are no longer shot in a sports stadium. Because of you, the people of Iraq no longer fear being executed and left in mass graves. Because of you, the world is more just and will be more peaceful.<sup>203</sup>

Bush spoke of the epic caliber of the soldier's "service and sacrifice" in their quest to defeat terrorists and protect Americans at home. Iris Young notes that "the stance of the male protector (...) is one of loving self-sacrifice, with those in the feminine position as the objects of love and guardianship."<sup>204</sup> As noted above, this symbolic relation can be traced in the relationship between the president and the American people, but in this quotes the rhetoric of protection evolves into one of savior. The weak and innocent of Afghanistan and Iraq have been saved, and they have helped bring peace to the world.

The women of Afghanistan had been saved from their dependence on less honorable Afghan men who had them "shot in sports stadiums." This rhetoric has parallels in discussions of other issues that concern the oppression of Third World women. The Indian-American scholar Uma Narayan writes about the tendency among American writers, both journalists and academics, to describe victims of dowry murder, sati,<sup>205</sup> and other lethal forms of violence against women as victims of their "culture," rather than the specific crimes at hand.<sup>206</sup> The murder of Afghan women that Bush refers to could be understood in such a "death by culture" framework, where American soldiers simultaneously save Afghan women from the backwardness of their culture, and the violence inflicted due to it by Afghan men. As part of a project to liberate Third World women it functions within the logic that Mary

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<sup>203</sup> Bush, *Acceptance 04*: 7.

<sup>204</sup> Young, "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State," 19.

<sup>205</sup> The rare practise of burning a living woman on her husband's funeral pyre, described in Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures. Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 85.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 51, 84.

Hawkesworth, with reference to Gayatri Spivak, describes as the “gendered logic” of neocolonialism, where “white men raid to save brown women from barbaric brown men.”<sup>207</sup> Through this rhetorical framework the military, America, and the President are portrayed as saviors and protectors of innocents, be they the American public or the women and children of Afghanistan and Iraq, who struggle against other “murderous” and “terrorist” men, who are, in the rhetorical setting, less than human. The grandness of the President’s cause is elated through highlighting these noble actions, and through referring to the government had saved women in Afghanistan from dangerous men, they strengthen the argument that they can do they same for Americans.

George W. Bush’s rhetoric of protection was built on the feeling of imminent threat in the American people. His campaign films and his repeating return to 9/11/2001 underline these threats. To appear as a ‘good’ protector, rather than a ‘bad’ invader, it was crucial to him that the American People thought Iraq had been a threat to American security. The campaign tried to accomplish this through framing the Iraq war in the larger war on terror. The theme of saviorism that was linked to this rhetoric should be seen as way to embolden the protector with nobility. The rhetoric of protection and saviorism are integral to paternal presidentialism. The rhetoric employs the affective relationship between the president and the people through using the emotional desire for security as motivation for aggressive actions abroad and for curtailing civil liberties at home. The broad executive authority given to the President after 9/11/2001 illuminates the possibilities the rhetoric of paternal presidentialism has for presidents who want to expand their authority.

When they centered strong protection of the American people in the election, the Bush campaign was also counting on that Bush would be seen as stronger and more efficient protector than his opponent. Thus the rhetoric of heroism that coated the Bush administration’s war in Iraq was important to the Administration’s message. To the Bush campaign, heroic masculinity was a great quality in a candidate. They were challenged by a Democrat who thought the same, who made the nation look back at the experiences in Vietnam.

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<sup>207</sup> Hawkesworth, "Feminisme versus feminisering. Krigslogikken i George W. Bushs regjeringsadministrasjon," 191.

### 4.3 John Kerry Reports for Duty

John Kerry's nomination for Democratic challenger in the 2004 election rested on 20 years of Senate experience and ambition, but was won by a few months of combat experience in Vietnam. Kerry was a likely pick in the 2004 primaries because the Democratic Party was heart set on a candidate that could avoid appearing "soft" on national security issues. In his early biographical campaign film, *Heart*, Kerry introduced the military theme right at the beginning: "I was born in Fitzsimmons army hospital in Colorado. My dad was serving in the Army Air Corps." He continued to tell about how he enlisted in the Army during the Vietnam War. The next two shots in the film were of two fellow veterans who gave testaments for Kerry: "When he pulled me out of the river, he risked his life to save mine," one veteran said. The next statements come from Kerry's daughter, Vanessa Kerry, and his wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry. "He has shown an ability to fight for things that matter," his daughter argued, while Teresa Heinz Kerry spoke of her husband as "the face of someone who's hopeful, who's generous of spirit and of heart." Kerry took over the narration towards the end, and continued the theme of optimism by saying that "We're the can-do people. And we just need to believe in ourselves again." The ad ended with the statement "A lifetime of service and strength. John Kerry for President."<sup>208</sup>

The film employed Kerry's experiences and actions as a soldier in Vietnam as a witness of his capability as Commander in Chief for a nation at war. The use of fellow veterans as witnesses underlined the importance of Kerry's Vietnam experiences. Kerry "sought to capitalize his medal winning experience in the Vietnam War to establish in the voter's minds his competence on national security issues," Georgia Duerst-Lahti pointedly says.<sup>209</sup> His reliance on other veterans' assessment of him would become a liability later in the campaign, though, when the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth tried to dismantle Kerry's military record. The slogan "a lifetime of service and strength" indicated that Kerry mounted

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<sup>208</sup> Kerry/Edwards2004, *Heart* [Campaign ad] (The American Museum of the Moving Image, 2004 [cited April 17 2007]); available from [http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav\\_action=election&nav\\_subaction=overview&campaign\\_id=178](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav_action=election&nav_subaction=overview&campaign_id=178).

<sup>209</sup> Duerst-Lahti, "PE 04," 26.

a campaign that aimed at outpolling President Bush as a strong protector for the nation, in spite of the great popularity Bush had enjoyed in connection with the war on terror.

### **4.3.1 Vietnam Veteran for President**

“I’m John Kerry, and I’m reporting for duty,” Kerry opened his acceptance speech at the Democratic convention.<sup>210</sup> Kerry did not only thank his family, as is customary in the acceptance speech, but also thanked his “band of brothers,” the men he fought with in the war. “Our band of brothers don’t march together because of who we are as veterans, but because of what we learned as soldiers,” Kerry said. This message was repeated by Kerry in the debates and ads closing up on Election Day. Much like George Bush framed his message in a 9/11 narrative, Kerry framed his message in a Vietnam narrative. After he graduated from Yale he went on two missions to Vietnam, and was awarded with three Purple Hearts, a Silver Star and a Bronze Star for his service in the war.<sup>211</sup> This was problematic for Kerry, though, as he had returned from Vietnam in strong opposition to that war, and had become a spokesperson for the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). He did not oppose the Iraq invasion, but argued that “As president, I will wage this war with the lessons I learned in war.” A part of this vow to lead as a veteran was to be “a president that will never mislead us into war,” and always exhaust other solutions before using force, before asking the armed forces to risk their lives on foreign soil.

Kerry’s Vietnam-based personal narrative had conflicting political implications in the 2004 election setting. On the one hand, his combat experience served as a witness for his aptitude as Commander in Chief, but on the other hand Vietnam exemplified the unsuccessful war against a foreign nation as part of a larger war, in that case the Cold War. The Vietnam theme in Kerry’s message prompted the question of whether Iraq was a quagmire where the United States would be defeated after years of struggle, just like Vietnam. Furthermore, Kerry’s opposition to the Vietnam War when he came home was used to question his patriotism and leadership abilities as Commander in Chief.

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<sup>210</sup> John Kerry, *John Kerry’s Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention* (The Washington Post, 2004 [cited November 19 2006]); available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A25678-2004Jul29.html> 1.

In the summer of 2004 an independent lobby group called the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, several of whom claimed to have served with Kerry, launched a campaign to discredit Kerry's accomplishments in the Vietnam War and highlight his opposition to the war when he came home. One of their widely televised ads say:

GEORGE ELLIOTT: "John Kerry has not been honest about what happened in Vietnam."

LOUIS LETSON: "I know John Kerry is lying about his first Purple Heart because I treated him for that injury."

VAN O'DELL: "John Kerry lied to get his bronze star ... I know, I was there, I saw what happened."

GRANT HIBBARD: "He betrayed all his shipmates ... he lied before the Senate."

ADRIAN LONSDALE: "And he lacks the capacity to lead."<sup>212</sup>

The struggle about what really happened in 1966-67 when John Kerry was in Vietnam became important in the 2004 campaign. But the comment that Kerry "lied before the senate," which refers to Kerry's 1971 senate speech as representative for the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, was probably equally important. In the address Kerry said that the veterans in his movement "told stories that at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires of portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power," and "razed villages in fashions reminiscent of Genghis Kahn."<sup>213</sup> In the 2004 election contest the atrocities were more reminiscent of the torture in the Abu Ghraib prison that had been revealed in the spring of that year. The Swift Boat Veterans primarily tried to damage John Kerry's claim to heroism in the Vietnam War. As a decorated veteran he had solid proof of his strength and bravery in times of danger. The Bush campaign saw communicated that these qualities would be good in a president, as noted above. Thus, it is probable that Kerry's military record was seen as a threat from a conservative standpoint. The Veterans were also concerned, though, about Kerry's opposition to the Vietnam War. They saw his 1971 statement before the Senate as a "betrayal." The implication was that Kerry was not sufficiently loyal, or sufficiently patriotic.

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<sup>211</sup> [www.johnkerry.com](http://www.johnkerry.com), *About John Kerry* [Webpage] ([www.johnkerry.com](http://www.johnkerry.com), 2006 [cited November 19 2006]); available from <http://www.johnkerry.com/about/>.

<sup>212</sup> Swiftboat Veterans for Truth, "Any Questions?," (The American Museum of the Moving Image. The Livingroom candidate., 2004).

<sup>213</sup> John Kerry, "Vietnam Veterans Against the War," in *A History of our Time. Readings on Postwar America*, ed. William H. Chafe, Harvard Sitkoff, and Beth Bailey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 276.

The Swift Boat campaign and Kerry's address to congress in 1971 was a theme in the first presidential debate in 2004, where Kerry had to explain that American troops in this case were not dying for a mistake, like he had said they did in Vietnam. He said "No, and they don't have to, providing we have the leadership that we put -- that I'm offering. I believe that we have to win this. The president and I have always agreed on that."<sup>214</sup> The implication was that they were dying for some of George Bush's mistakes, but invading Iraq was not one of them. The Bush campaign was not responsible for the Swift Boat shadow campaign, but they did what they could to reveal ambiguity in Kerry's position on the war. On several occasions in the presidential debates Bush stated that "My opponent says help is on the way, but what kind of message does it say to our troops in harm's way, "wrong war, wrong place, wrong time?" Not a message a Commander in Chief gives, or this is a 'great diversion.'"<sup>215</sup>. As strength, resoluteness and unwavering resolve was established as common denominators of good military leadership and manhood in the 2004 campaign, Kerry was treading deep waters. The conservative effort to discredit Kerry's war experience and its role in the election showed that performance of military manhood was significant in the election.

### 4.3.2 Negotiating Patriotism

Operating in the same political situation President Bush, Kerry also addressed the nation's political situation after 9/11:

Remember the hours after September 11th when we came together as one to answer the attack against our homeland. We drew strength when our firefighters ran up stairs and risked their lives so that others might live (...).<sup>216</sup>

The theme of heroism that Bush relied on in his message to the Republican convention was also present in Kerry's rhetoric. Still, Kerry reveals a problematic relation to the post-9/11 discourse. He is proud, he said, that the nation stood unified behind President Bush after 9/11, but also noted that "there are those who criticize [him] for seeing complexities" when it

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<sup>214</sup> Debates, *The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate*: 13.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.: 8, 14-15, 20. Debates, *2000b*: 8, 18.

<sup>216</sup> Kerry, *Acceptance*: 7.

comes to the war on terror.<sup>217</sup> The implication was that he had received criticism for not wholeheartedly supporting the President's agenda for protecting the nation. He would make decisions based on facts, not ideology, he said. In address to the demand of patriotism after 9/11 he said that he had an "important message for those who question the patriotism of Americans who offer a better direction for our country." The message was that "when Americans stand up and speak their minds and say America can do better, that is not a challenge to patriotism; it is the heart and soul of patriotism."<sup>218</sup> He went on to talk about how he and other Americans have fought under the flag, and that it belongs to all of them. In implicit criticism of the Bush administration's demands for a "patriotism" that banned criticism he said: "That flag doesn't belong to any president. It doesn't belong to any ideology."<sup>219</sup>

A number of American intellectuals voiced concerns about the health of American democracy as a result of the demands of "patriotism" after 9/11. The labeling of those who wanted to understand the events of 9/11 within a complicated situation in international politics, rather than as an isolated "barbaric" action, as "excusenics," and the ridicule of the anti-war movement in the American press are examples of the troublesome limits on public expression that occurred.<sup>220</sup> Iris Young explains this tendency towards public control of expression through labeling certain positions "unpatriotic." She argues that America after 9/11 has gained traits of a 'security state', that justifies war against others and control of its own citizens as security measures. With reference to the measures in the Patriot Act that suspends habeas corpus for suspected terrorists and lessens restrictions on surveillance of citizens, Young notes that "to protect the state and its citizens, officials must therefore keep a careful watch on the people within its borders and observe and search them to make sure they do not intend evil actions and do not have the means to perform them."<sup>221</sup> This contract for security, where a certain degree of freedom is given up by the citizen in exchange for

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.: 10.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Butler, *PL*, 3-4.

<sup>221</sup> Young, "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State," 8.

protection, is strikingly similar to the contract between the husband and women and children in a traditional patriarchal family model, Young argues.<sup>222</sup> In this light, the demands of patriotism after 9/11 that were put on Americans, which felt restrictive to John Kerry and others who wanted to criticize the administration's political agendas, could be understood as facets of such a paternalist 'security state' tendency. For John Kerry this posed an even bigger problem. His statement that the flag "does not belong to any president" could be understood as resistance to accept the conditions of the Bush administration's offer of security. Granted that he was aiming for a position as the nation's protector through the role of Commander in Chief himself, this attack on the conditions of the Bush administration's offer of security might have been crucial to his campaign.

John Kerry's rhetoric in the 2004 election was based on his Vietnam experience as a witness for his strength, bravery, and heroism. He used his veteran status and the qualities it brought out in him as a rhetorical tool to prove his capability to lead American forces in war. His heroism in the war also helped him communicate that he would be a brave and strong protector for the American people if elected president. Thus Kerry relied on successful performance of heroic masculinity in the campaign, just like George W. Bush. Though it would seem Kerry's heroism was duly accounted for through his war decorations, the Swift Boat campaign damaged that image. The Swift Boat Attacks started during the summer of 2004. At the time of the presidential debates in the fall Kerry's military record had been disputed in most major news outlets, and the skirmish was well-known to the public.

## 4.4 The Return of Heroic Masculinity

The campaign strategies of George W. Bush and John Kerry in 2004 produced an image of presidential manhood that was based on heroic masculinity as a key ingredient of paternal protectionism in wartime. The notions that constituted this were above all bravery, toughness, and strength in the face of danger, virtues that somewhat correspond with George Mosse's description of a stereotypical image of manhood.<sup>223</sup> This masculine ideal was both

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.: 9.

<sup>223</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.



specific for the campaign and ancient in its symbolism. The candidates built it through their self-presentation, but it is most present in their description of other men.

President Bush underlined the value of bravery in the following section, where he criticizes Kerry for not sufficiently acknowledging Iraq's interim government:

Well, Prime Minister Allawi was here. He is the leader of that country. He's a brave, brave man. When he came, after giving a speech to the Congress, my opponent questioned his credibility. You can't change the dynamics on the ground if you've criticized the brave leader of Iraq. One of his campaign people alleged that Prime Minister Allawi was like a puppet. That's no way to treat somebody who's courageous and brave, that is trying to lead his country forward.<sup>224</sup>

In that response Bush called Allawi "brave" no less than four times, and in the last sentence he added the synonym "courageous" for emphasis. The message was that it is his courage and bravery that makes him a man that should be respected. Through praising Allawi in contrast to Kerry, Bush implied that Kerry was not a brave man like Allawi, and furthermore that he did not acknowledge Allawi's courage.

American soldiers were praised to a larger extent than any other group for their heroism in the 2004 campaign. As shown above, George Bush equated the character of the American military with the character of the nation, and suggested that American kids had found heroes again, because of the efforts of the military and other brave Americans after 9/11. John Kerry praised the troops in a less flowery fashion than Bush, but also made the link between himself and the men (and women) in uniform more explicit. In his acceptance speech he said that:

I know what kids go through when they're carrying an M-16 in a dangerous place, and they can't tell friend from foe. I know what they go through when they're out on patrol at night and they don't know what's coming around the next bend. I know what it's like to write letters home telling your family that everything's all right, when you're not sure that that's true.<sup>225</sup>

Kerry did not try to glorify American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan to the extent Bush did, but through using his own combat experience as proof of his own heroism and toughness he

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<sup>224</sup> Debates, *The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate*: 22.

<sup>225</sup> Kerry, *Acceptance*: 7.

communicated that the heroic masculinity performed by a soldier at war was an important ideal in the election. He noted that the “sacrifice” made by American soldiers represented “the most noble thing anyone can do.”<sup>226</sup>

In this way both candidates celebrated the honor, strength, nobility, toughness, and ‘character’ that the military represents. R.W. Connell notes that the “studies of state military forces,” that have been conducted in men and masculinities studies, “show an organizational effort to produce and make hegemonic a narrowly defined masculinity which will make its bearers efficient in producing the organization’s effect of violence.”<sup>227</sup> Utilizing this narrowly defined masculinity in the political sphere and holding it up as an ideal would then presumably have the effect of making its bearers, President Bush and John Kerry, efficient in producing the state’s effect of violence. Through applying the discourse of military manhood to the campaign they underline their capacity of violence as Commander in Chief, and their willingness to use that force to protection of the nation.

A third representation of heroic masculinism as it occurred in the praise of other men was the celebration of firefighters, police officers, and other “rescuers” after 9/11. Their lifesaving heroism became the symbol of the kind of American bravery that would help America prevail in spite of danger. Michael Kimmel describes this phenomenon as a “rehabilitation of heroic masculinity” modeled on “firefighters, police officers, and soldiers,” who “represented some of the last resisters of gender equality.”<sup>228</sup> The ability of violence as means of protection, and toughness in the face of danger were integral to this heroic masculinity. This rhetoric of saviorism, Hawkesworth notes, calls for muscle in American men.<sup>229</sup> This call was answered by President Bush and John Kerry in their self-presentation, as well as in their tribute to the rescuers. They underlined the absolute necessity of strength and courage, and vowed not to bow down to the enemy. The President had already showed his “muscle” in Afghanistan and Iraq. Senator Kerry argued that he had shown his in

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<sup>226</sup> *The First Bush vs. Kerry Presidential Debate* (The Commission on Presidential Debates, September 30, 2004 [cited November 17 2006]); available from <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2004a.html>: 20.

<sup>227</sup> Connell, *Mas*, 259.

<sup>228</sup> Kimmel, *MiA*, 248-49.

<sup>229</sup> Hawkesworth, “Feminisme versus feminisering. Krigslogikken i George W. Bushs regjeringsadministrasjon,” 190.

Vietnam. They both attempted to perform heroic masculinity, and be seen as the “rescuers” America needed. One of the consequences of this shift was that the ideas of a modern manhood shaped by care and equality receded to the background of presidential rhetoric. Compassion was translated to protection. “Real men were back,” Kimmel notes, “and we are safer for it.”<sup>230</sup>

#### 4.4.1 “Flip –flop”

Through centering heroic masculinity in their self-presentation, Bush and Kerry produced a parameter for evaluating manly performance in the campaign. With a clearly defined ideal of manliness, the task of locating *unmanliness* in the opponent’s personal features might have been easier than in the 2000 election.<sup>231</sup> The notion of the heroic man that protected his family and country included an ideal of unwavering resolve, of action rather than cunning, where the imperative was not to *show* weakness. As the President put it: “If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy.”<sup>232</sup>

The Bush team ran an aggressive campaign against the alleged weaknesses of his opponent. Most significant was the several ads and claims that portrayed John Kerry as a “flip-flop,” who sailed “wherever the wind blows,” and was likely to change his mind about most issues within days. This mode of attack was especially applied to Kerry’s positions on the war in Iraq. In an address to the troops in his acceptance speech, Bush stated that “we owe you our thanks, and we owe you something more. We will give you all the resources, all the tools, and all the support you need for victory.” That’s why Congress granted \$87 billion in extra funds for the troops, Bush said, and attacked Kerry for opposing the grant:

When asked to explain his vote, the Senator said, "I actually did vote for the 87 billion dollars before I voted against it." AUDIENCE: Flip-flop! Flip-flop! Flip-flop! “Then he said he was "proud" of that vote. Then, when pressed, he said it was a

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<sup>230</sup> Kimmel, *MiA*, 249.

<sup>231</sup> Ekenstam, "Män, manlighet och omanlighet i historien," 33.

<sup>232</sup> Bush, Acceptance 04.

"complicated" matter. There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.<sup>233</sup>

Bush repeated this argument in the debates, one in which he added "Not what a Commander in Chief does when you're trying to lead troops."<sup>234</sup> The implication of this statement was that Sen. Kerry was not fit to be Commander in Chief because he was not willing to support "our troops in combat." Bush also ridiculed Kerry for being indecisive. That the Convention was already trained to shout "Flip-flop!" at this comment shows just how important this message about the Senator was to the President's campaign. Bush furthermore framed Kerry in opposition to the brave leaders of other countries who support America in Iraq, and the brave men he had talked to who were happy to be liberated from Saddam Hussein. The attack was amplified by the previous statement that "the world will drift toward tragedy" if America "shows uncertainty" or "weakness" at that moment in time. The essence of this message was that Sen. Kerry was not fit for the presidency because he was "uncertain" and "weak," and America cannot afford that. Both his lack of resolve and his alleged inability to support the troops made him appear *unmanly* in the framework of heroic masculinity.

Kerry implied that he saw this threat and felt the need to respond to it at the end of the first debate. "I have no intention of wilting. I've never wilted in my life. And I've never wavered in my life. I know exactly what we need to do in Iraq, and my position has been consistent: Saddam Hussein is a threat. He needed to be disarmed," he argued.<sup>235</sup> The claims that Kerry was a "flip-flop" who "wavered" and "wiltered" cast were efficient in getting him on the defensive in the campaign. Georgia Duerst-Lahti argues that the "Republican effort to paint Kerry as indecisive, a 'flip-flopper,'" was also a way to cast him as (...) a stereotypical woman who keeps changing her mind."<sup>236</sup> As noted in chapter two, the concept *unmanlyness* has strong links to femininity on the symbolic level, but is defined particularly by its role as "countertype" to the masculine ideal in a particular setting.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Debates, *The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate*: 13.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Duerst-Lahti, "PE 04," 33.

<sup>237</sup> Ekenstam, "Män, manlighet och omanlighet i historien," 33, Mosse, *Image of Man*, 56-76.

The \$87 billion was a recurring theme in the debates because of Kerry's comment about his vote, but also because he admitted his mistake. Kerry tried to meet the charges by asking "Well, you know, when I talked about the \$87 billion, I made a mistake in how I talk about the war. But the president made a mistake in invading Iraq. Which is worse?"<sup>238</sup> But the difference was that the President never had admitted a mistake, and was thus not 'losing face,' even if he was wrong. Being steadfast, resolute, and firm was so crucial to the Bush campaign that not even on a direct question from an audience member would he name one, however inconsequential, mistake he had made in his term in office.<sup>239</sup>

#### 4.4.2 Strength and Smartness at War

The effort to discredit John Kerry's masculine performance was not limited to the "flip-flop" charges. The heroic masculinity that gained a privileged position after 9/11 had a ruggedness and working class air to it, which resonated well with the southern cowboy image that President Bush had cultivated in the 2000 campaign and his first term. Bush's masculine performance in 2004 was even more oriented towards "dominance," in opposition to "technical expertise."<sup>240</sup> The technologically savvy, globally oriented businessman with "cosmopolitan tastes" that emerged as a powerful symbolic figure in the 1980s and 90s was displaced as an ideal by the rugged firefighter after 9/11, Kimmel argues.<sup>241</sup> In a word-use study Georgia Duerst-Lahti finds that words associated with dominance masculinity, such as "strength," "tough," and "control," were four times as likely to be mentioned about candidates in 2004 as technical expertise words like "intelligent," "smart" and "expert." In 2000 the ratio was two to one.<sup>242</sup>

In the first presidential debate in 2004 Kerry asserted: "I believe in being strong and resolute and determined. And I will hunt down and kill the terrorists, wherever they are. But

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<sup>238</sup> Debates, *The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate*: 13.

<sup>239</sup> The Commission on Presidential Debates, *The Second Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate* (The Commission on Presidential Debates, 2004 [cited November 19 2006]): 41.

<sup>240</sup> Connell, *Mas*, 194.

<sup>241</sup> Kimmel, *MiA*, 249.

<sup>242</sup> Duerst-Lahti, "PE 04," 31.

we also have to be smart, Jim.”<sup>243</sup> Through framing himself as a war hero *and* a wise statesman with experience, he tried to combine toughness and expertise. “It’s one thing to be certain,” Kerry argues, “but you can be certain and be wrong.”<sup>244</sup> Bill Clinton addressed the issue of expertise and dominance in his speech to the 2004 Democratic National Convention as well, and argued that “strength and wisdom are not opposing values (...) they go hand in hand.”<sup>245</sup> The Democrats had themselves contributed to the difficulty they had in communicating that strength and wisdom can go hand in hand, though. Through nominating a candidate who touted his war credentials as a qualification for the presidency to the degree Kerry did, the core of their own message was that a heroic warrior, not a seasoned statesman was needed most to lead the country forward. Though this might have been unintentional, there is a limit to how many point it is possible to make simultaneously, and thus Kerry’s centering of his own veteran status in the campaign might have made it difficult for him to argue for a “better” and “smarter” war on terror, rather than a “tougher” one.

The situation was further complicated by the tinge of effeminacy that technical expertise manhood carried due to its association to the educated, eloquent, liberal upper class. John Forbes Kerry was the son of Richard Kerry, a member of the U.S. diplomatic corps, and Rosemary Forbes Kerry, wartime nurse and member of the wealthy Forbes family. During his childhood, Kerry spent time in Europe when his father was stationed there, and in France on the Forbes family’s estate. The Republican effort to highlight Kerry’s continental tastes, ties to France, and upper class, north-eastern background was highly reminiscent of the campaign against Martin Van Buren in 1840.<sup>246</sup>

#### 4.4.3 Unilateral Performance and the Global Test

Kerry’s ties to Europe and his fluent French were linked symbolically to his foreign policy agenda, where a multilateralism and mending relations with Europe were important.

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<sup>243</sup> Debates, *The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate*: 4.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> William J. Clinton, *Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention* [Web Page] ([www.americanrhetoric.com](http://www.americanrhetoric.com), 2004 [cited April 17 2007]); available from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/convention2004/billclinton2004dnc.htm>.

<sup>246</sup> Kimmel, *MiA*, 251.

His message on the Iraq war was that the President should have let weapon's inspections in Iraq go on, and that he should have made the war a multilateral effort. America needed new leadership to become a nation "that is stronger at home and respected in the world," he argued, in response to the lack of enthusiasm for America's war in Iraq in other countries.<sup>247</sup> Concerns that the Senator would let other countries or the United Nations "dictate" America's foreign policy had already surfaced by the time of the Convention. He met this claim aggressively in his speech by arguing that "I will never give any nation or any institution a veto over our national security." Kerry also underlined that he would not be "soft" in his dealings with national security: "Let there be no mistake: I will never hesitate to use force when it is required. Any attack will be met with a swift and a certain response," he said.

In October, the issue of whether it was possible to combine multilateralism with a strong and decisive approach on national security gained momentum. In the first presidential debate Kerry used the phrase "global test" in relation to preemptive strikes:

KERRY: The president always has the right, and always has had the right, for preemptive strike. (...)

But if and when you do it, (...) you have to do it in a way that passes the test, that passes the global test where your countrymen, your people understand fully why you're doing what you're doing and you can prove to the world that you did it for legitimate reasons.<sup>248</sup>

In his response to this section, Bush argued that he would not take any political positions, particularly concerning national security, only because they were "popular in certain capitals in Europe." After the debate the Bush campaign seized upon the comment, and made a television ad that asked: "So we must seek permission from foreign governments before protecting America?" The ad asserted that "President Bush believes decisions about protecting America should be made in the Oval Office, not foreign capitals."<sup>249</sup> The President also pursued the issue aggressively in the second and third debates.

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<sup>247</sup> Kerry, *Acceptance*: 17.

<sup>248</sup> Debates, *The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate*: 25.

<sup>249</sup> Bush/Cheney2004, *Global Test* (The American Museum of the Moving Image, 2004 [cited November 19 2006]); available from

The "global test" issue became particularly important in the campaign because of the agreement among the candidates that America and the President could not show "weakness" in dangerous times. It was interpreted as an indication that Kerry would not make independent decisions concerning national security, and thus make America dependent on other nations for their security. There is a certain irony in the fact that being a nation in a world where arms are abundant is a condition of dependence on other countries for security per se. But this irrevocable fact was one of the major things the Bush administration tried to banish in their national security effort after 9/11/2001. Though Kerry's main concern was that America should have economical, moral, and practical support from other countries before making preemptive strikes that would develop into expensive nation building projects, his comment was read as a threat to the nation's independence.

#### **4.4.4 War and the Presidential "I"**

Symbolically, the "global test" issue touched upon the core notion of national independence and autonomy. In a political situation that had brought heroic, and even military, masculinity to the forefront, the politics of diplomacy was framed by the Bush campaign as dependence on other nations, and a sign of weakness in national security. It was not only John Kerry's manhood that is at stake, but the nation's masculine omnipotence. If one considers the attacks on Kerry's person, which try to communicate a lack of heroism, decisiveness and independence, the message is that this will in turn endanger the nation. In both the self-presentation strategies of Kerry and Bush and these attacks, the nation's autonomy and sovereignty at war is convoluted with the masculine independence of the potential Commander in Chief.

In her book *Manhood and Politics* Wendy Brown writes that "A real man lays his life on the line. For what is death risked? For honor, for glory, for a value greater than life (...) for the "ultimate value" of the state."<sup>250</sup> Candidates for the presidency do not endanger themselves, but there are several examples from the 2004 election that the candidates try to talk to the effect that they are risking their lives for the nation, or at least have done so in the

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[http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav\\_action=election&nav\\_subaction=overview&campaign\\_id=178](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav_action=election&nav_subaction=overview&campaign_id=178).

<sup>250</sup> Brown, *MP*, 182.



past. The constant reminder of the Democratic candidates' war efforts helped create an image of a man that would make the ultimate national sacrifice if needed. The more widely used strategy to gain this effect, though, is equating the nation's military efforts with the presidential prospect himself. John Kerry's repeated statement "I will hunt down and kill the terrorists, wherever they are," is an example of such an equation where the candidate creates the illusion of risk on his own part through the words "hunt" and "kill." In this statement the military and intelligence effort deployed by the state to counter terrorism is equated with John Kerry's "hunting" terrorists, presumably with his shotgun. A similar, but not as blunt, notion is evident in George W. Bush's comment "I have a solemn duty to protect the American people, to do everything I can to protect us."<sup>251</sup> In these messages the presidential "I" stands for the nation's military and political power. Through this process the President's person and manhood is blended with the political and military action taken in response to a crisis. The President's personal qualities become an image of his policies and vice versa, and do not only influence the perception of the candidate, but also runs the risk of constituting sovereignty as "a certain style of national masculinity."<sup>252</sup> Bonnie Mann argues that there has been such a tendency towards masculine performance on behalf of the nation in American politics in recent years. She notes a concern about a political situation where the nation's "aesthetic" sovereignty becomes equally or more important than tangible political realities to political leaders. Bush's argument that America cannot *show* weakness at the time of the 2004 election, as well as the "global test" issue imply that her argument that the Bush administration has seen international politics as a site where America as a nation can prove its manhood has some merit.<sup>253</sup>

## 4.5 Conclusion

After 9/11/2001 the Bush administration offered masculinist protection from external and internal enemies to still the people's need for security. Bush noted that the war on terror might be fought through shock and awe strikes, as well as "covert operations, secret, even in

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<sup>251</sup> Debates, *The First Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate*: 23.

<sup>252</sup> Mann, "How America Justifies Its War: A Modern/Postmodern Aesthetics of Masculinity and Sovereignty," 155.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

success.”<sup>254</sup> The rhetorical situation that developed after 9/11/2001 centered traditional, heroic masculinity as the ideal that would save and protect the American people in the future. President Bush ran a campaign that was designed to reap the benefits of the new discursal framework that developed in American politics after 9/11. The campaign underlined the precariousness of the nation’s security, and the possibility for further disruption of people’s lives as a result of that. This message in turn demanded political attention to national security. The Bush campaign touted the accomplishments of the war on terror at home and abroad, and the President framed himself as the one political official that was responsible for the nation’s security. In this way the discourse of paternal presidentialism was strong in the election, and the affective relationship between the president as Commander in Chief at a time of crisis and a people shocked by terrorist attacks gave the President a symbolic position as the nation’s savior and protector. His promise of protection for the American people, as well as protection of innocents in other nations, had an aspect of masculinist protection to it that made gender performance an important aspect of the election. One of the main challenges for the democratic challenger was to negotiate the logic of masculinist protection.

John Kerry attempted to perform a military masculinity that was valued in the post 9/11 discourse of heroism. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth’s attacks, as well as the doubts about his patriotism because of his opposition to the Vietnam War and his lukewarm support of the Iraq war, served to damage that image. The Bush campaign tried further to frame Kerry as unmanly through highlighting his liberal upper class background, which in American cultural history has been associated with effeminacy. The symbolic equation of the President’s masculine virtues and his foreign policy was also used by the Bush campaign to imply that Kerry would be “soft” in national security politics. The democrats did, however, choose to compete with Bush on his performance as Commander in Chief when they nominated a candidate who would tout his war credentials as qualification for the presidency to the extent Kerry did. Kerry competed with the President in performing heroic masculinity, and the outcome of that contest was important for the public’s impression of the candidates.

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<sup>254</sup> George W. Bush, *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People* (Office of the Press Secretary. The White House, 2001 [cited November 19 2006]); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

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There did indeed seem to be a shift “from the masculinity of politics to masculinity as politics” after 9/11/2001 evident in 2004 election material.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Kimmel, *MiA*, 247.

## 5. Gender and Paternal Presidentialism

When I introduced the notion paternal presidentialism as a description of the most central gendered symbolism in the two campaigns I have analyzed, I was asked whether a woman who had presented the same arguments would perform “maternal presidentialism,” and whether this would be any different from paternal presidentialism at all.<sup>256</sup> The answer to that question is crucial to the argument in this thesis. It requires consideration of the first two major questions I asked at the outset of this work:

- Are there images of manhood at work in the 2000 and 2004 presidential candidates’ self-presentation? If so, which?
- Are there rhetorical strategies that make use of gendered symbolism and images? If so, which images and symbols do they employ, and what is their function?

As I have shown there are indeed both gendered rhetorical strategies and images of manhood at work in the rhetoric that has been analyzed in this text. The positive images of manhood that have been particularly visible in the material have been that of the family-man, the soldier, and the firefighter, the rural American cowboy, and the hardworking public serviceman. There has also been the image of manhood presented by the former presidents, who constitute the expectations to the office. The negative images of subordinate manhood have been visible especially in the Republican campaigns’ attacks: the effeminate aristocrat, the intellectual egghead, the Frenchman, the flip-flopper, and the unpatriotic. There have also been images of a foreign and terrifying manhood: the terrorists, Afghan men who mistreat women, Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden.

These images have in different ways functioned as part of gendered rhetorical strategies. The positive images have been used in the candidates’ self-presentation, the negative ones to discredit the opponent or to frame oneself as a brave protector in the face of fearsome foreign men. The two most important strategies in this respect have been the discussion of manliness vs. unmanliness, and the contrast between dominance and technical

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<sup>256</sup> Kyrre L. Kausrud, April 26 2007.

expertise masculinity.<sup>257</sup> These rhetorical strategies were evident in both the 2000 and 2004 campaign, with slightly different approaches. The function of contrasting oneself to unmanliness was discrediting the opponent, while appearing as the opposite and positive manly ideal. The conflict between technical expertise and dominance masculinity was used by George W. Bush in these campaigns to mark his Texas origins in opposition to north-east intellectuals. It was used by Gore and Kerry to argue that America needed better statesmanship.

However, the most significant cluster of gendered symbols in the material lies in the notion of the president as caretaker and protector of the people, in paternal presidentialism. In this cluster the image of the father is highly significant, as both George W. Bush and Al Gore showed particularly clearly in the 2000 election. The father image has followed the presidency throughout its history, and it continues to do so today. In the 2000 election, it was the father as caretaker and role model that were the most significant images visible in the campaign rhetoric. In the 2004 election the paternal image was that of the protector, who risks his own life on a heroic mission to secure the safety of his loved ones. Thus the argument that the gendered rhetoric in these two campaigns is *paternal*.

Furthermore, the thesis argues that the rhetoric in these two elections reveals a symbolic *presidentialism*. Chapter three shows how the 2000 election rhetoric with its focus on moral manhood can be read as an attempt to restore the president's symbolic position as unique, alone and larger than life.<sup>258</sup> The impeachment trials of the incumbent president damaged the president's symbolic position, and it seemed like both Al Gore and George W. Bush wanted it restored in 2000. It was restored almost beyond precedent in 2001. The terrorist attacks on America led to a demonstration of the potential in presidentialist symbolism. After 9/11 Americans looked to the president for safety and action, Congress looked to the President and granted him broad executive power to wage preemptive war and strengthen domestic surveillance, and the President responded with action and a demand for loyalty. As Iris Young argues, the protection that was offered the American people was that

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<sup>257</sup> Connell, *Mas*, 194, Ekenstam, "Män, manlighet och omanlighet i historien," 43.

<sup>258</sup> See page 43, based on Hinckley.

of the heroic man who protects his family out of love.<sup>259</sup> These political events are not direct consequences of paternal presidentialism, but the logic of paternal presidentialism (including what Young calls “the logic of masculinist protection”) serves as a good rhetorical framework for concentration of power in the presidency.

Some facets of the discourse of paternal presidentialism are available to women. The rhetoric that focuses on “taking care” might immediately seem very available to women. Maybe a woman would have a benefit, even, in appearing as a moral person and a good role model. The studies on gender and elections in America considered in chapter two suggests that this might be the case. They also suggest, however, that there are serious hindrances for female presidential candidates.

Paternal presidentialism offers part of the explanation for this inequality. When it comes to the rhetoric of paternal care, the only hindrance for a woman seeking the presidency might seem to be the habit of imagining a man in that symbolic position. But, as discussed in chapter three, paternal presidentialism has a class dimension that was particularly visible during and after the attempted impeachment of former president Bill Clinton. Presidentialism, it seems, requires a symbolic president that is truly unique, alone, a symbol of the nation, who can present him- or herself as identical to the nation, as Barbara Hinckley describes.<sup>260</sup> This requires a performance of independence and autonomy that is more available to upper class citizens than others, more available to men than to women, and more available to whites than to blacks. Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon note in an article on the meanings of “dependency” in American politics that “it is as if male breadwinners absorb into their personalities the independence associated with their ideologically interpreted economic role, whereas (...) female nurturers become saturated with the dependency of those for whom they care.”<sup>261</sup> This comment sheds light on the gender difference in the symbolic interpretations of male and female “care.” The breadwinner cares for his family in an independent role, while the nurturer does the same in a dependent position. These images are

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<sup>259</sup> Young, “The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State,” 4.

<sup>260</sup> See page 43.

<sup>261</sup> Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “Decoding “Dependency,”” in *Reconstructing Political Theory. Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Uma Narayan and Mary Lyndon Shanley (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 42.

part of the symbolic construction of paternal presidentialism. The facet of care in paternal presidentialism is rooted in the role of the genteel patriarch, rather than the nurturing mother.

In the rhetoric of masculinist protection, however, paternal presidentialism manifests itself in a male body. The reason for this is that the aesthetics of violence and protection in contemporary American society are masculine. Symbolism that can be turned into rhetorical tools relies on cultural images. In contemporary America, the image of a woman as savior, protector and warrior risking death in the face of danger, and leading troops fearlessly at a time of war is not a very strong cultural image to build rhetoric on. This means that male candidates, like George W. Bush and John Kerry in the 2004 election can use the aesthetics of violence to their benefit when arguing that they are capable Commanders in Chief. This is a rhetorical tool that it is difficult to make available for women.

It need not, however, be impossible. There are available images that can be used to create a symbol of a female protector in American culture. One could for instance try using images from nature, of the she-bear who fiercely defend her cubs, to reach such an end. In this negotiation of masculinist protection the justification of aggressive preemption is lost. When translated into a female body masculinist protection might simply lose some of its foreign adventure, and stay a little closer to home. In this case, the difficulty of translating masculinist protection might actually produce a political difference. At the very least a rhetorical pull towards showing strength by war abroad would be lessened.

There are possibilities for transcendation of this symbolism, however. Hege Skjeie notes that charismatic authority might be a good source of authority from women because it is easier for them to appear different, special, and closer to the electorate than their male counterparts.<sup>262</sup> Given the chance women can employ the authority of paternalism to develop an authority based on maternalism that couples the authority of the head of state with maternal care for the nation, she argues with reference to former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. Though the low percentage of women in the American Congress makes this possibility of translating paternalism difficult in contemporary America, the example outlines a possibility for how women could use the paternal rhetoric of care to win

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<sup>262</sup> Hege Skjeie, "Om autoritet: weberske idealtyper og norsk politikk," *Norsk Statsvitenskapelig Tidsskrift* 9, no. 3 (1993): 234-35.

votes in a presidential campaign. After all, an important source to authority in presidential politics is presenting an alternative to the establishment.<sup>263</sup>

The answer to the question of whether a maternalist presidency is possible turns out to be a definitely maybe. There is no doubt that a female candidate would face huge challenges. She would have to find a way of negotiating paternal presidentialism, and create a room for translation of the current masculine symbolic cluster that paternal presidentialism represents. It would undoubtedly be difficult, but that need not make it impossible. It is quite likely that a scholar in 1800 would find the notion that a crude man of few words, much temper and working class background could ever become President of the United States absurd. The empowerment of new groups – whether they be the heroic artisans of Andrew Jackson’s constituency or working women in America today – has opened up for this kind of translation of presidential discourse before.

Of the questions posed at the start of this text, one has received mostly implicit answers thus far: What political implications do the gendered meanings in the campaign discourse have? Paternal presidentialism matters, not only for the rhetorical strategies of the candidates but also for the selection of candidates. The gendered symbolism of the presidency makes it difficult for voters to imagine a woman in the office, and makes it harder for women to rate well in electability ratings. Thus the masculine symbolic cluster of paternal presidentialism poses a significant barrier for female candidates. Furthermore, the symbolic relationship between the president as an all-knowing father and the citizens as dependants who need to be cared for is not a healthy symbolism for democracy, as several writers I have drawn upon in this text point out. Paternal presidentialism is a rhetorical tool for presidential power, and it is at its most potent in times of danger and crisis. However, paternal presidentialism is not a “grand theory” about the presidency. As the presidency itself, its symbolism can change, and it might just have to if it encounters new diversity in 2008.

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid.



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